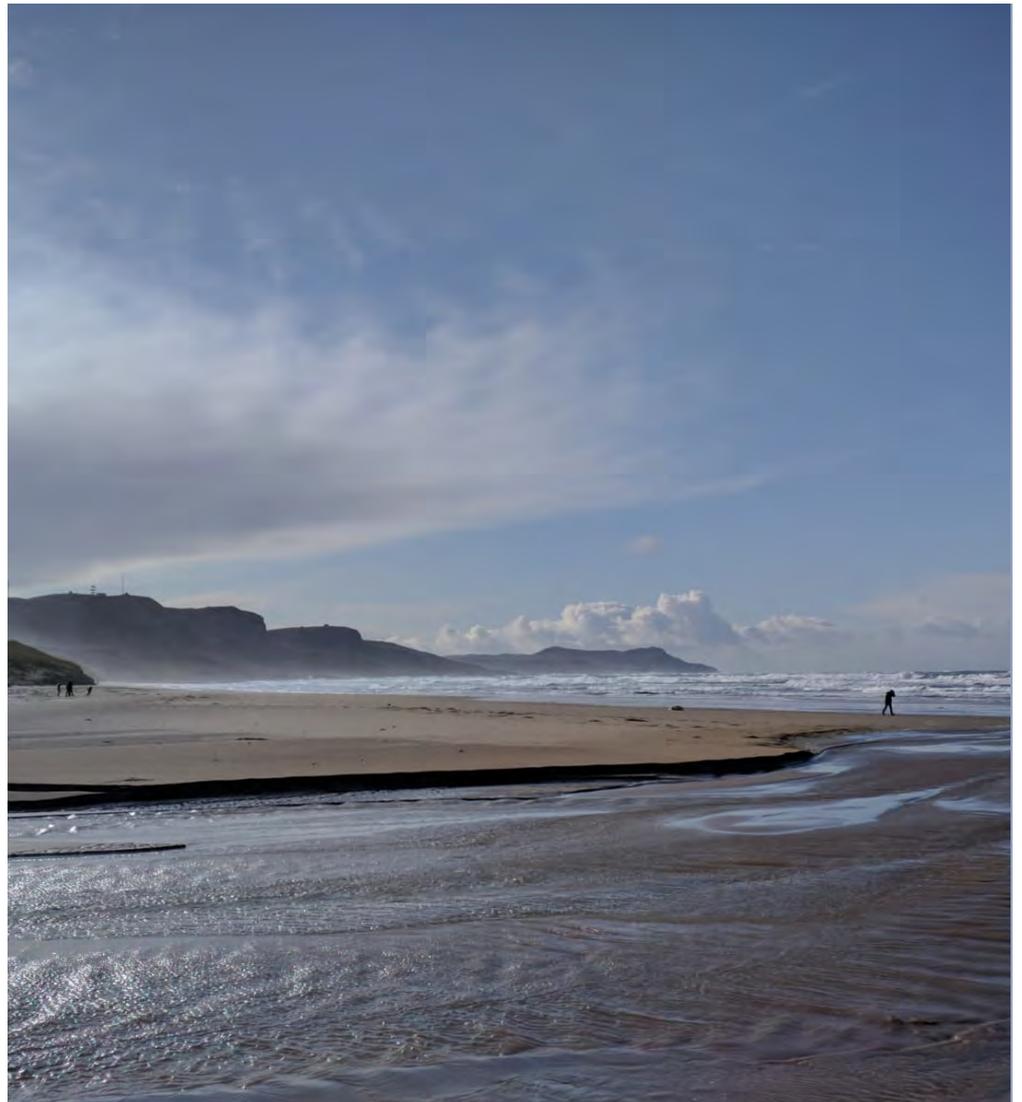


ANNUAL MEETING BETWEEN ICES, ADVISORY COUNCILS AND OTHER OBSERVERS (MIACO)

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ICES BUSINESS REPORTS



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Volume 1: Issue 1

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i Executive summary

The annual meeting between ICES, Advisory Councils and other Observers (MIACO) took place online in January 2021. Many representatives of advisory councils and observers participated. This was the first time that MIACO took place through remote means.

The meeting covered a review of the advice and advice processes in 2020, the new guide to ICES advice, the measures taken to assess and mitigate the disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic, a discussion and survey on the ecosystem and fisheries overviews, and stakeholder information in the fishing opportunities advice. During Any Other Business the issues of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems and the development of online advice were discussed.

The discussions and information shared are used by ACOM to ensure the saliency of the science and increase the legitimacy of the advice.

1 Welcome and opening of the meeting

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the 2021 MIACO Meeting was held as an online meeting and reduced to a 4-hour meeting on 14 January. Following a short welcome, the MIACO meeting participants were briefed about the meeting etiquette. After this, a short round of introduction of participating organisations was done. Individual presentations were not done given the online format and mindfulness of the available time for the meeting. The meeting was attended by 64 participants representing the Advisory Councils and observers to the ICES advisory process (see Annex 1).

2 Adoption of agenda (Doc 02)

The agenda had been distributed to the participants prior to the meeting and was adopted without further amendments (see Annex 2).

Action points from the 2020 meeting were presented and progress on each of those explained.

4.2 ICES to consider the proposed Workshop in light of feedback. WGQuality had been established and will meet for the first time in 2021.

5.2 ICES to address the challenges on stakeholder engagement further and to investigate further training of expert group chairs. In progress.

6.5 ACs and other stakeholders to send information to expert groups prior to their meeting. Three expert groups had received data from stakeholders in 2020.

6.5 Add sense-checking to the ACOM meeting agenda. Due to the Covid-19 situation this item had partly been postponed 2020 but will be resumed to this year.

Suggested dates for MIACO 2022: 13–14 January 2022, at ICES HQ Copenhagen.

3 Review and news

3.1 Review of ICES Advisory services in 2020 (Doc 03)

An overview of the advice process and the advice provided in 2020 was given in document 03. An update on quality assurance also took place.

MIACO was invited to review the advisory process in 2020 and to comment and discuss any issues that arose since the 2020 MIACO meeting.

Of the activities in 2020, the following issues were highlighted the number of stocks with Management Plan and MSY advice, the two stocks with errors in the headline advice, the new viewpoint on ship scrubbers, the continuation of development work in 2020 such as on MSE approaches and VME modelling, the new presentation style of the single-stock advice sheets, and the importance of quality control.

MIACO thanked ICES for the work done on quality assurance in 2020. It was mentioned that some stocks in 2020 have been through a very rigorous quality assurance process and it appears that some have not. ICES answered that the inclusion of all of the data flows going into the stock assessments is the last of the data flow being created, but that as many assessments as possible are now going into the Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF). There had been a recent review of the advice sheets, and how we might adapt the quality section of the advice section to indicate how many stocks are in the TAF.

The workshop on rebuilding plans was discussed (WKREBUILD). A request from the PELAC was submitted to the EU on the horse mackerel rebuilding plan in relation to this workshop and it was asked if the workshop recommendations had been agreed. ICES explained that ICES should be able to answer the special request and provide catch options, even if it is not the headline advice, assuming the rebuilding plan is considered to be in line with the targets set out in the plan.

MIACO asked that when reference points have been reviewed at benchmarks, an explanation of the principles behind their calculation is given. MIACO were told that ICES has guidelines on reference points on category 1 and 2 stocks, which are being slightly updated. As discussed at MIAC, the reference points issue is high on the ACOM agenda, with a workshop planned for 2022.

The importance of WKIRISH was also highlighted, regarding widening the scope to other areas, and the application of the results. It was explained that a subgroup of ACOM was looking at WKIRISH and its applicability and relevance. This should report by March 2021 to the whole of ACOM.

MIACO wanted to know when the timeline for producing online advice sheets. Whilst it was not possible to give a target time, the increased use of R and interactive graphics online, heading towards an HTML approach was highlighted, with the option of a PDF and also linking to web services.

MIACO raised the issue of salmon in the Baltic. It was found to be confusing when ICES delivers advice saying that the current management regime is risking some of the weak salmon stocks, but also a catch advice. The ACOM chair explained that the proposal for a management plan for Baltic salmon was withdrawn, so ICES had had to make a precautionary framework to provide advice. ICES is in discussions with the managers to align the advice framework with potential advice for this year, trying to ensure that there is a stronger basis for advice in the years to come.

The impact of Brexit was considered, and the MOU with the UK. In terms of the advice, the potential likely difference foreseen right now, was that for shared stocks, there would need to be an agreement from all parties before it is used for the headline advice.

MIACO had concerns over the Baltic Sea advice. Natural mortality in the eastern Baltic cod is so high that there are problems deriving reference points, which is a challenge to ICES in terms of providing advice. Baltic fisheries management is greatly challenged by the ecosystem health.

There were also questions regarding the mixed pelagic fishery in the Baltic. MIACO wanted to know if ICES had done any sensitivity testing regarding the outputs of the stock assessment models, if the mixing is actually very different to what we already know. ICES explained that this still hadn't been done as no resources were currently available to answer this question, despite having received a request from the EU on this.

3.2 Guide to ICES advice and ten principles

The Guide and the rationale for its creation was presented to MIACO.

https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/2020/Guide_to_ICES_Advice.pdf

MIACO was invited to comment on the Guide to ICES advice and ten principles.

ICES presented the approach that it is taking to ensure that the advice is appropriate, relevant, and of sufficient quality for the advice requestors. The advisory landscape is changing and the ICES advice framework is evolving to accommodate the needs of advice requestors. ICES advice requests are becoming more diverse, and in response, in our work on each request ICES advice must consider the core issues of quality control, consistency, and ecosystem-based management (EBM). To accommodate and facilitate the necessary changes, ICES is changing the *ICES Introduction to the Advice* to a 'Guide' that encapsulates a more appropriate framework incorporating the ecosystem approach in all sectors.

The production of ICES advice occurs in four steps: request formulation, knowledge synthesis, peer review, and advice production. Each of these steps is governed by some of ten principles:



The guide to the ICES advice explains the ten principles in more detail. This presentation was well received.

Questions raised by MIACO included:

Principle 2 dialogue with advice requestors: is this recorded and accessible to the public? ICES answered that the step is mentioned but the discussions are not documented. The process is an iterative dialogue between requesters and ACOM facilitated by the ICES secretariat.

Principles 4, 5, 6, are all data used in the advice quality-assured in accordance with the ICES standards and does ICES reject the data that do not conform? This is semi-aspirational at the moment, but our preferred route is to not use unassured data in the future. This is a massive challenge to apply these principles in house, let alone in the institutes, and it is even harder for biodiversity data. That said, this is the goal that ICES is working toward.

Principles 5 and 6, how does ICES proceed if an expert group disagrees with the advice? The ADG minutes will capture this. ADGs cannot change the evidence base on their own, they need

to work with the expert group. If this occurs, it should be documented in an annex to the expert group report.

Overall: how does ICES work within the patchy EBM policy landscape to provide relevant advice? ICES role is a science for policy boundary organisation with knowledge brokers acting as specialists (namely ACOM).

4 Covid-19 pandemic disruption

4.1 Response of ICES to the pandemic, and potential impact in 2021

ICES presented the mitigation measures and impact of the pandemic on the advice production in 2020 and look forward to 2021.

MIACO was invited to comment.

Travel restrictions related to COVID-19 started in March 2020 while the ACOM annual meeting was taking place. ACOM decided to suspend temporarily any new special request process and focus in recurrent advice. Subsequently, special requests for advice were evaluated again from April 2020 onwards.

In spring 2020, ICES started to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting fisheries sampling. ICES gathered information from EU and other member countries about the effects of the pandemic such as cancellation of surveys and limited sampling. The main problems were found in EU countries and were related to at-sea sampling. Port sampling and surveys were also impacted in UK.

In June 2020, stakeholders and managers were informed about changes in the structure of the advice (i.e. abbreviated advice sheets). ACOM discussed in September 2020 the format for the 2021 fishing opportunities advice and it was agreed to further adapt the advice sheets for 2021 advice for 2022.

Guidance was developed by ACOM in 2020 on how to deal with missing survey data in stock assessments. A template was provided to WGs to report deviations from stock annexes due to COVID-19. Further deviations from standard stock assessment procedure, as recorded in the stock annexes, are expected in 2021. During 2020, ICES observed delays in some advisory processes and data delivery as result of COVID-19. Also, deviations from stock annexes due to missing surveys occurred already in 2020 (e.g. the assessments of anchovies and sardines, blue whiting and several *Nephrops* stocks). ACOM will provide guidance on how to address deteriorated data quality in stock assessments but the experts will be able to apply their own innovative approaches too.

In July 2020, ICES developed guidance for online meetings. ICES meetings will be held online until at least May 2021, while planned benchmarks for 2021 may be postponed if no sufficient progress is shown. Benchmarks and more iterative processes are additionally challenging when held online. Issues can also arise in online meetings when trying to involve experts from different time zones.

Action point 4.1. ICES to keep updating and recording the impact of Covid-19 disruption on the science network and provision of advice.

4.2 Feedback for MIACO on concerns about disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic

A round table for comment took place where MIACO was invited to voice their concerns for 2021.

There was a misunderstanding about to the removal of the stakeholder information section from in the abbreviated advice sheet. There were fears that the stakeholder information was being taken out from all the advice sheets, only to realize later that the removal was due to the abbreviated advice in response to the COVID-19 disruption. MIACO requested clarification regarding the stakeholder section in the advice sheets for the current year, will this section be reinstated?

ICES informed MIACO that the stakeholder information section as it stands will not be reinstated for the time being. The reason for this is that there is no common understanding about what the stakeholder information is and what happens to it this information. Work is ongoing to find alternative routes for stakeholder information. (see section 6 below).

MIACO asked if ICES would consider to use other non-traditional sources of data in their assessments in order to compensate for data deficiencies due to the COVID-19 disruption to sampling programmes.

ICES acknowledged that there is huge potential for other data sources to make way into stock assessment, like data from CCTV or self-sampling among others. ICES is closely monitoring the work done by the Working Group on Technology Integration for Fishery-Dependent Data or the outcomes from the Workshop on Guidelines and Standards for Fisheries Dependent Information. However, in the short term, this information cannot be readily used as there are no quality assurance procedures or a benchmark that looked in detail to these data sources and the quality of the data.

5 Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews

MIACO was asked to complete a short survey on the current format of the overviews and comment on their relevancy.

MIACO participants were prompted to give feedback on the overall structure, most useful section, missing topics, display of material and usefulness of the **Fisheries Overviews**.

Some additional presentational suggestions for specific figures featured in the Fisheries Overviews were suggested. These included further work on illustrating stock status in relation to reference points.

Some in MIACO commented that it would be helpful if ICES published in the WG reports for stocks, and/or in its single-species advice the “value” for B_{MSY} that forms the basis of the estimated $MSY_{B_{trigger}}$ reference point (when calculated as the 5th Percentile of B_{FMSY}).

It was thought that it would be beneficial that in the future if the Fisheries Overviews and Ecosystem Overviews were more integrated into the other advice. In addition, certain overlap between products (i.e. in the Baltic area) was highlighted. It is premature to talk about merging the products but there are discussions about it.

MIACO participants were also prompted to give feedback on the overall structure, most useful section, missing topics, display of material and usefulness of the **Ecosystem Overviews**:

There is some follow up narrative missing in the Ecosystem Overviews. For example, the Activity-Pressure-States, but what are the responses that the managers offer and apply to that state, and what is the progress made by those actions? For example, in the Celtic Sea, TAC is mentioned as the most important management tool but not if it has worked or not.

The NGOs consider the Ecosystem Overviews very important because additional layers and options, absent on the Single-species advice, together with other management actions are made available.

The Overviews are not yet seen as hard advice by managers when they take decisions in an EBM approach, and this ICES advice could spell out concrete alternative management options.

The ecosystem overviews are over-descriptive and need to back up other pieces of advice. It is important to keep consistency between different pieces of advice.

The recent ecosystem overview in the ABNJ (Oceanic area) gave a clear picture on oceanography, climate change, and narrative of other activities occurring in the area and provided a better understanding of the High Seas. ICES highlighted the challenges of working on the NEA Oceanic areas, which is a large area without a specific ICES EG, and collecting and aggregating data was difficult. However, ICES will keep working on them and updating its products in the area.

Participants look forward to more developments on cumulative impact aspects, on MPAs and others like including more international issues in, to gain better understanding on what are the most important pressures in an area are before managers take any actions.

ICES highlighted that the Central Arctic Ocean ecosystem overview will join the list very soon (2021) as there is a direct request from NEAFC and the ecosystem advice is in the MOU and agreement with all advice requesters.

6 Stakeholder information in fishing opportunities advice

Initial progress has been made in 2020 on processes to incorporate industry derived data into ICES data flows, with further workshops on standardising procedures for data collection (e.g. Workshop on Standards and Guidelines for fisheries dependent data (WKDSG, November 2020)). However, for a range of reasons (including Covid-19 disruption) no progress has been made on sense testing or considering stakeholder information in the fishing opportunities analysis/advice.

Initial correspondence suggest members of MIACO are concerned about this lack of progress. Thus, MIACO was invited to provide suggestions for next steps in developing methods for considering stakeholder information into the system of advice production.

ICES presented an overview of stakeholder engagement in ICES fishing opportunity advice, covering numerous interlinking issues.

The Stakeholder Information section of the advice sheets was discussed. ACOM changed procedure for receiving inputs for this section at the end of 2019, such that this information was provided to expert working groups for their consideration rather than advice drafting groups. Subsequently, this section was dropped as a standard section in the 2020 abbreviated advice. Three letters documenting stakeholder information were received by expert groups in 2020, none of which were included in the advice sheets. One stakeholder indicated that they had initially misunderstood that abbreviated sheets specifically excluded this section for all stocks in 2020, and as such had not provided inputs in the first half of the year. But the challenges with this section have been broader, because of a lack of common understanding about the section's objectives, guidelines and ownership. This has led to some issues and tension around its inclusion (or not) for various stocks. ICES has decided to drop this section from all advice sheets in 2021.

Other initiatives current underway include using industry sample data (WKSCINDI, WKDSG evolving and formalising the process), exploring potential sense-checking exercises (arose in WKRRMAC, introduce sense checking of assessment results/dynamics), and the ongoing work on a stakeholder strategy for ICES (as requested by ICES Council). ICES is going back to basics now, given the need to clearly define the purpose and objectives for stakeholder interaction in the advisory process since stakeholders fulfil many roles in ICES.

Following the presentation, MIACO was invited to comment. MIACO was generally happy with developments in ICES with regards to stakeholder engagement. They look forward to continuing improvement in the quality, breadth and depth of ICES knowledge base. It was emphasised that there are many different dimensions to 'stakeholders', all important but with different capabilities/levels to input into the advisory process. ICES will need to be specific about who is supplying information, who is it being presented to, etc. For example, it could be useful to distinguish fishing industry information/data from other stakeholder groups. Fishers have key benefit of being out at sea for long periods of the year, with potential to provide data from their observations. One objection was raised about the dropping of the stakeholder information section from the fishing opportunities advice sheet. ICES stated that it was committed to exploring the issue further, and implementing improved initiatives in the future.

The usefulness of fishing industry data and the need to develop a knowledge strategy to bring this information into the ICES advice process was emphasised. The EU Advisory Councils are also working on more robust approaches for this. For example, the Pelagic AC indicated that they are developing a standardised template to gather data from the fishing industry (with some delays due to the COVID-19 disruptions) which will be proactively shared once developed. This will help maintain dialogue. It was noted that there was good consensus during the WKDSG workshop. The aspects of legitimacy and credibility were raised: credibility can be addressed in formal Quality Assurance (QA) procedures (i.e. following due scientific process, documenting clearly how it was done and the basis of the information), while legitimacy is in eyes of the beholder and trickier to deal with. ICES has put substantial effort on issues of credibility, but more focus needs to be put on improving the perception of legitimacy. The WKDSG report (due in the first quarter of 2021) will propose some actions towards this.

The discontinuation of various fishers' surveys (e.g. the North Sea fishers' survey, EU-ROPECHE) was lamented. The rationale for ending the surveys was considered to be that the results were not actively used, or was not adding new information relative to what was found in assessment models (consistency in viewpoints wasn't adequately seen as having utility). The

need to utilise possibilities of working closely with fishers, while ensuring scientific norms are followed was highlighted.

Action point 6.1. ICES to work to bring in data and knowledge from fishers, and sense checking of advice.

7 Any other business

Two issues on special requests that might come and considerations on UK were rejected because ICES felt could not reply.

Two issues were accepted for discussion at MIACO.

1. Deep Sea Conservation Coalition for information on EU VME special request

The requester was not present but nevertheless ICES explained the content and process in context with ICES work in ecosystem and environment advice.

2. Further development of advice views

ICES received a question on development of the database for the advice (advice view). The database was seen as very useful and a good development. ICES responded that due to COVID-19 disruption, this task had been reprioritised and no further development had taken. ICES informed though, that the intention remains intact so the task will commence again when the workload allows.

8 Actions points

Action point 4.1. ICES to keep updating and recording the impact of Covid-19 disruption on the science network and provision of advice.

Action point 6.1. ICES to work to bring in data and knowledge from fishers, and sense checking of advice.

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Annex 2: Draft Agenda (annotated)

1) Welcome and opening of the meeting.

Meeting etiquette and introductions.

https://www.ices.dk/about-ICES/Documents/ICES_meeting_etiquette.pdf

2) Adoption of agenda (Doc 02).

Including review of minutes and action points of MIACO 2020 in Doc 2

http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Committee%20report/ACOM/2020/MIACO_2020.pdf

Suggested dates for MIACO 2022: 13–14 January 2022, at ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen.

3) Review and news

a) Review of ICES Advisory services in 2020 (Doc 03).

An overview of the advice process and the advice provided in 2020 is given in document 03. An update on quality assurance will also take place.

MIACO is invited to review the advisory process in 2020 and to comment and discuss any issues that arose since the 2020 MIACO meeting.

Note: matters related to Covid-19 pandemic will be addressed during agenda item 4.

b) Guide to ICES advice and ten principles

The Guide and the rationale for its creation will be presented to MIACO.

https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2020/2020/Guide_to_ICES_Advice.pdf

MIACO is invited to comment on the Guide to ICES advice and 10 principles.

MIACO will be asked which principle is perceived as most pertinent to ICES advice.

4) Covid-19 pandemic disruption

a) Response of ICES to the pandemic, and potential impact in 2021 (Doc 04).

ICES will present the mitigation measures and impact of the pandemic on the advice production in 2020 and look forward to 2021.

MIACO is invited to comment.

b) Feedback for MIACO on concerns about disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A round table for comment will take place where MIACO is invited to provide their concerns for 2021.

Break 15:00 to 15:20

5) Fisheries and Ecosystem Overviews

MIACO will be asked to complete a short survey on the current format of the overviews and comment on their relevancy.

Fisheries Overviews: <https://www.ices.dk/advice/Fisheries-overviews/Pages/fisheries-overviews.aspx>

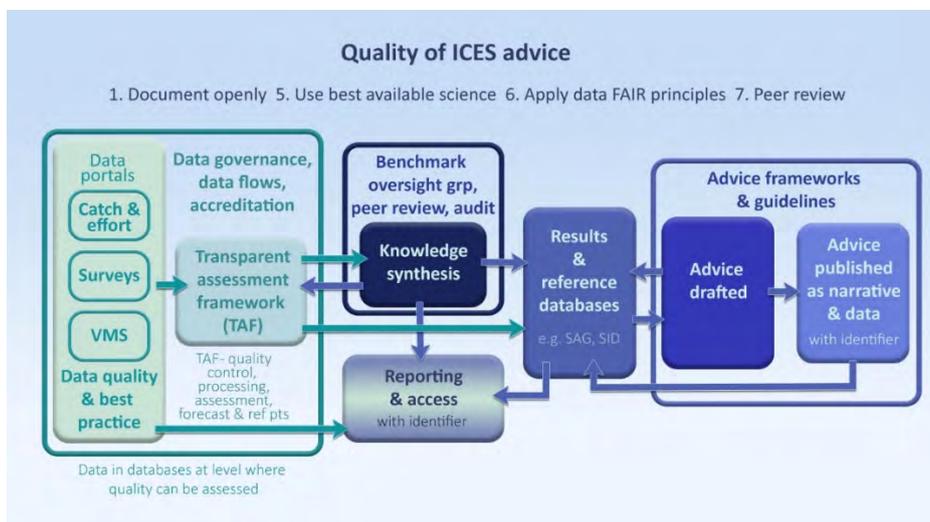
Ecosystem Overviews: <https://www.ices.dk/advice/advisory-process/Pages/Ecosystem-overviews.aspx>

The online survey will be circulated the week before.

6) Stakeholder information in fishing opportunities advice

Initial progress has been made in 2020 on processes to incorporate industry derived data into ICES data flows, with further workshops on standardising procedures for data collection (e.g. Workshop on Standards and Guidelines for fisheries dependent data (WKDSG, November 2020)). However, for a range of reasons (including Covid-19 disruption) no progress has been made on sense testing or considering stakeholder information in the fishing opportunities analysis/advice.

Initial correspondence suggest members of MIACO are concerned about this lack of progress. Thus, MIACO are invited to provide suggestions for next steps in developing methods for considering stakeholder information into the system of advice production.



Current data and knowledge flow in the production of ICES fishing opportunity advice.

8) Any other business.

Please inform ICES secretariat of any issues by 7 January.

- i) Deep Sea Conservation Coalition for information on EU VME special request
- ii) Database question

We are aware of ICES ongoing efforts to develop a comprehensive database of information presented in the ICES advice. This database can be an extremely valuable resource for stakeholders and decision-makers with an interest in science-based fisheries management. Could you provide an update on the current state of this database and any further plans for potentially expanding it going forward, for example by also including advice from previous years?

Close 17:00.