The ICES Data Type Guidelines and their place and role in the profusion of guidelines, manuals, standards, cookbooks and best practice.

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Data held at the ICES Data Centre are used in various assessments for expert groups and regional sea conventions. In order to ensure comparable data with high quality, guidelines have been developed and adopted.

In particular, the ICES operational group, Data and Information (DIG), and its predecessors, have developed guidelines to assist those involved in the collection, processing, quality control and exchange of various types of (mainly) physical oceanographic data, for example, Moored Current Meter, Shipborne ADCP, Seasoar, Chlorophyll and Nutrient data. These guidelines have been adopted by the ICES Data Centre and are recommended to the ICES Community.

Each guideline addresses the data and metadata requirements of a specific data type. They cover three main areas:

- What the data collector should provide to the data centre (e.g. collection information, processing, etc)
- How the data centre handles data supplied (e.g. value added, quality control, etc)
- What the data centre can provide in terms of data, referral services and expertise back to the data collector

This presentation examines the place of the ICES Data Guidelines in amongst the many other guidelines, manuals, standards, cookbooks and best practice documents that exist today. When some of these guidelines were first developed (almost 30 years ago), there were few others available. Now there are many guidelines, standards, cookbooks and best practices documented and available from a variety of sources.

We have investigated current knowledge and usage of the present set of ICES Data Type guidelines and found some positives (they are known, used, referenced) and some negatives (not known, etc.). Before reviewing and updating the guidelines, it was agreed that the first priority was a communication strategy.

Thus the aim of this presentation is twofold: firstly to raise the profile of the ICES Data Type Guidelines, and secondly a ‘call to action’ to bring together the different bodies (including IODE/JCOMM, SeaDataNet, national activities) to make a more coordinated approach to linking the guidelines, and to map out the complex landscape.

There are a number of issues which the presentation will discuss:

- Each organisation, programme and project is trying to be “the” place to go – how can better signposting be provided so users can find what they need?
- Related to the above point – are good links in place both from the ICES Data Guidelines to more detailed manuals and to the ICES Data Guidelines from elsewhere?
- Are there overlaps or duplications between the ICES guidelines and other similar activities?
- Guidance is needed on which guidelines, manuals, etc., are best for which purpose.
- Provision of information describing the benefits to users.