

## ICES Request Form

Request from	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, NL
	On behalf of the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative
Contact within organisation	
Content contact person	
Request announced	2-5-2024
Request received	
Answer deadline client	
Request code (client)	
Request code (ICES)	
Request	GNSBI advice request on cumulative impact assessment

**Request to ICES**

**Background information:**

The GNSBI provides a regional platform for spatial integration of human activities by better aligning maritime spatial planning and contributing to effective cross-boundary management processes, with the aim to make optimal use of our shared sea and protect the marine ecosystem. The GNSBI working track on Cumulative Impact Assessment requests expert advice from ICES to contribute to these aims.

ICES is requested to help identify key pressures and cumulative impacts in the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas and mitigate those through MSP decision making on a sea basin level.

The added value of the GNSBI CEA is supposed to be a future looking perspective:

- how adaptive can this process be to include future activities (e.g. CCS)?
- How best to aim for maximum adaptability?

**Request specifications:**

a) Provide an overview of relevant cumulative impacts assessments (including those used within OSPAR, NSEC, ICES, relevant European research projects and national approaches) aimed at an applied setting and informing management decisions;

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| <p>b) Define common principles for cumulative impacts assessments in relation to the expected applications and the types of management decisions that need to be informed on the Greater North Sea Basin level. Identify criteria for the evaluation of the available cumulative impacts assessments;</p> <p>c) Provide recommendations for the application of the most suitable tool(s) for cumulative impact assessments on, at least, the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas with the aim to answer the key questions conducted by the GNSBI WT-CIA (see appendix). Also include a process to further develop the required knowledge base with the aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Identify the main anthropogenic threats that compromise the achievement of GES</li><li>○ Evaluate planning scenarios of offshore wind and other human activities</li><li>○ Inform MSP decision-making on a sea basin level</li><li>○ Evaluate management measures aimed at mitigating human activities and their pressures</li><li>○ Assess the effectiveness of the MSFD Program of Measures and the Natura 2000 Directive to reduce human-induced impacts</li></ul> |
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Planning ICES	<p>2024:</p> <p>Scoping Workshop as part of the WGCEAM in November building on the overview produced at GNSBI CIA meeting in Brussels, 2024. This will include managers/re-ipients of advice, to identify and report on the expected methods/tools for CIA (i.e. scoping for ToR a), the types of management questions/ decisions that need to be informed and criteria for the evaluation of those CIA methods/tools (i.e. scoping for ToR b).</p> <p>2025:</p> <p>WKGNSBI (4 days in person), to include 1 day with managers representation. This workshop will develop an overview and evaluation of CIA applications, based on method informed by the WGCEAM Scoping Workshop, and provide recommendations for the application of the most suitable tool(s) for CIA for, at least, the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas.</p> <p>The advice product will include (partial) answers to initial responses to questions based on the state-of-the-art method(s) and knowledge available at ICES (i.e. WGCEAM and Ecosystem Overviews), clarifying the current knowledge base and its applicability.</p> <p>ICES can provide an overview of relevant CIA , the criteria for evaluation and initial recommendations for the application of the most suitable tool(s) for cumulative impact assessments on the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas with a process to develop the required knowledge base.</p> <p>Subsequently, ICES would be able to build on the 2025 advice to provide suggestions for further processes leading to the application of the tool(s) to evaluate specific management measures and possibly(?) the MSFD Program of Measures and the N2000 Directive. This will not be feasible until 2026 and requires further preparation and scientific input.</p>
ICES contact person	
WG(s) involved	WGCEAM
Preparation timing	As above
Review group	Reviewers as part of workshop in spring 2025 RGGNSBI
Advice drafting group	ADGCIA (23-25 September 2025)

ACOM Webex	WCCIA (23 October 2025)
Release date	5 November 2025

## **Annex 1 – Key questions sought to be responded to by CIA**

The overarching questions on what GNSBI will do with results of CIA and on resourcing are questions on governance level. Draft as received in August 2024.

### **Policy level**

1. What are generic cumulative impacts of all activities (priorities) on all (priorities) ecosystem components (species/indicators) specified for species/indicators and human activities?
2. What are cumulative impacts specified in a spatial way for ecosystem components?
3. Related to 1 and 2; What are the relative contributions to the cumulative impacts of different activities and associated pressures in any area? So that we can manage activities as needed. By intensity of activity and /or by area.
4. Can we uphold the threshold levels of OSPAR /MSFD and N2000 obligations on protection of species? A
5. Can we produce results on questions above on a short notice (Quick scan) and related; how to simplify without losing too much information?

### **Scope**

#### Statements

1. Spatial scope: regional seas as defined by OSPAR; II The Greater North sea and III The Celtic Seas but include local impacts if pressures are exerted on a sea basin level
2. Forward looking, to run scenarios (2030-2040-2050) but consider a relevant baseline?
3. Existing measures should be included in assessments

#### Questions

4. Consider including climate change impacts in scenarios (based on internal discussion in OSPAR and ICES)
5. Potential measures can be included (after careful considerations on each of the potential measure) in scenarios
6. Land based sources should be included in the assessment but consider how to include measures.

### **Uncertainties**

1. What are levels of uncertainties in results and how to present this in plain language?
2. What are knowledge gaps and inviting for (management) proposals on how to “close” them?

### **Input**

1. What do we have on the shelf that we could use right now (when considering the 2025 quick scan)?
2. Learn from others (Symphony-Baltic Sea).
3. To be able to present results in a plain language and appealing to responsible bodies/policy levels means including this in project architecture (in an early stage) using expertise of the science policy interface.
4. Forward looking temporal scope also asks for considerations on inclusion of life cycles (potential) affected species and life cycle of pressures at the marine environment of included human activities.

### **Output**

1. Results to be presented in a language that is appealing for policy makers/public.
2. Identify ecological hot spots/cold spots by presenting maps on spatial distribution of pressures and overlap with ecosystem components.
3. Address responsible bodies in presenting the results and give perspectives to act.(better English?).
4. Align planning of CIA on a sea basin level with QSR and MSFD planning. Alignment with MSP temporal planning is an ambition.

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