

Description of the ICES advisory system

This document describes the ICES advisory system, including the different categories of advice requests, the handling process for the different types of requests, the resources needed to fulfil the requests, recipients of ICES advice, arrangements for providing advice, as well as overall costs and realized income.

Council is invited to take note that:

- *ICES delivers. We have addressed all except one requests in recent years*
- *ICES advice is appreciated and good feedback is received from recipients*
- *100% cost recovery is not fully implemented. The income from advice covers almost 100% of the direct cost, but only around 80% of the total costs.*
- *The main barriers to realizing full cost recovery of the advisory system are the imbalance between the income and the costs in the MoU with EU and the lack of established agreement for payment of recurrent advice provided to some countries/members*

To work towards the current policy of 100% cost recovery of the total costs it is suggested:

- 1. to renegotiate the MoU with EU, to a) increase the payment from EU, b) to reduce the number of advice deliverables under the MoU, or c) a mixture of a) and b), and*
- 2. to negotiate MoUs with Member Countries receiving recurrent advice,*

Council is asked to mandate the President to sign the MoU with EU for 2017 as well as to start negotiations with Member Countries on MoUs for recurrent advice deliverables.

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1 The different categories of advice requests to ICES

The requests for advice to ICES can be divided into the following categories:

1.1 Recurrent requests

Recurrent requests are those requests for advice which are stated in MoUs and specifying an annual (or in some cases biannual) delivery. The majority consist of advice on fishing opportunities to the EU, NEAFC, NASCO and Norway. ICES on average provides annual advice on more than 225 stocks.

1.2 Special requests

Special requests covers all non-recurrent requests for advice. The category can be separated into two sub-categories, the ones that can be included to the regular Working Programme, and the ones that are an addition to the regular Working Programme.

Special requests, included to the regular Working Programme

This category of special requests for advice covers all non-recurrent requests that can be planned prior to the beginning of each year. These are mostly OSPAR, NASCO, NEAFC, and some DG MARE and DG ENV requests, on very different topics, ranging from common indicators for assessment of seal populations to evaluation of a long-term management strategy for the fisheries on the blue whiting stock. ICES has in recent years annually provided advice on 8 (2015) planned special requests;

Special requests, in addition to the regular Working Programme

This category of special requests for advice are all non-recurrent requests which emerge during the year. These are mainly from the EU (fisheries and environment), NEAFC and ICES member states. Especially as regards EU (fisheries) there has been an increase in the number of unplanned special requests. ICES has during the last three years annually provided advice on 20 (2015) special requests received in addition to the regular working programme.

In the past nearly all requests were recurrent or special requests that could be included to the regular Working Programme. However, in the last 5-10 years the number of special requests arriving during the year has grown and, now, makes a considerable demand on resources. This is not only because of the absolute resource demand (here the recurrent requests for advice on fishing opportunities are still by far the largest) but because the introduction of a new process during the year is much more demanding in terms of planning and implementation. This is because it is about finding marginal resources and timing their use on top of a schedule which is already full for most experts and for the ACOM leaderships and Secretariat time as well.

Technical services

Technical services¹, provided by the ACOM chair/vice-chairs, as appropriate, and/or the Secretariat under the oversight of ACOM, are in almost all cases the result of requests which are an addition to the regular Working programme.

These services fall into four categories: Technical Assistance; Clarification of Advice; Process services; Review Services.

2 Handling of the different categories of ICES advice requests

The different categories of ICES advice requests are handled as follows:

2.1 Recurrent and special requests included to the regular working programme

For recurrent requests, and special requests, included as part of the regular Working Programme, cf. Section 1 the planning starts with a compilation of requests prior to the ACOM consultations at the Annual Science Conference (ASC). At the ACOM consultation meeting, ACOM will comment on the overall plan for these requests and the generic ToR for the relevant expert groups.

The work plan for the coming year, including venues and timing of expert groups, review groups, advice drafting groups and the ACOM approval web-conferences, is then developed by the Secretariat in close consultation with ACOM leadership and the experts involved. In this process the availability of experts is secured by direct contacts (normally email) between the experts and the professional and assisting secretaries in the Secretariat. The experts involved in this planning are chairs and stock assessors: for each expert group there is a chair or co-chairs elected by ACOM and for each stock a stock assessor is assigned based on last years' programme. The work plan is approved by ACOM prior to the October Council meeting.

The review process for the recurrent advice on fishing opportunities (vast majority of the request under this category) is conducted at the benchmark meetings. In all other cases a review group is established. Before being invited, reviewers are approved by the ACOM leadership. The secretariat is responsible to contact the reviewers.

¹ A technical Service is the provision of scientific information or a process that produces scientific information that policy makers can use. The service may include recommendations made by individual or groups of scientists, but it does not include a recommendation on behalf of ICES (except to reiterate a recommendation previously agreed by ACOM or former ICES Advisory Committees).
Read more:
http://ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2015/2015/General_content_of_ICES_advice_2015.pdf

2.2 Special requests, in addition to the regular Working Programme

For special requests, not part of the regular working programme this starts with the Secretariat receiving information about a potential request from an advice client. The ACOM leadership will then discuss a possible way forward including possible clarifications of the request, the scope, potential experts (normally including the chairs of the relevant expert group and if relevant the stock assessor) and a potential process and timeline. If appropriate and possible the request will be added to an existing process, typically as an extra ToR to an existing expert group. This is generally not possible for special requests with short timelines and where expert groups are already overloaded/already are working according to agreed ToR. The Secretariat will then contact the relevant experts directly and ask for their comments regarding the request, scope, data needs, their availability and process. These questions are then resolved through a – quite often extensive – email correspondence between the experts and the Secretariat. Once experts have agreed to a process and timeline, the Secretariat sends a letter to the advice client explaining (if relevant) proposals for rewording of the request, the planned scope, the process including expert involvement and timeline, and a budget. The advice client will then return with a letter of acceptance or questions for further clarification. When a final letter of acceptance has been received the process is confirmed to the experts and the process is initiated. Needs for adjustments underway are frequent, mainly due to lower expert availability than they had confirmed in the planning stage. In some cases adjustments also become necessary because data or models turn out to behave differently than assumed and a different approach must be taken.

Securing expert availability for the review process in case of requests not part of the regular working programme is challenging given short deadlines.

2.3 Technical services

The process to organize a technical service is similar to a special request approach. However, in this case the ACOM leadership will identify what type of technical service will be used: i) technical assistance; ii) clarification of advice; iii) process services; iv) review services. In case of the latter the Secretariat will identify reviewers to be approved by the leadership.

3 Resources needed to fulfil advice requests

Expert availability is presently evaluated by direct contact between the Secretariat and the relevant experts. In most cases the chairs of the relevant expert groups and national ACOM members are involved. ICES has presently no formal contact to those in charge of overall resource planning at the host institutes in this process. It is anticipated that the experts and ACOM members check any resource availability issues at national level.

To support the resource allocation issue the Council in 2014 decided to establish the ICES Resource Coordination Tool (RCT):

- to give resource managers a better overview of which expert resources are needed and used in ICES work, with a possibility to plan and prioritise the use of limited resources;

- to make information on commitments and timing of these more accessible throughout the year, for both the resource manager and the expert, and also allowing an end-of-the year overview of how resources have been used;
- to allow individual ICES experts to contribute additional information about their personal skills and expertise to the ICES resources database, and in that way ease the overview of available experts with specific skills, of relevance for both scientific and advisory work.

4 Recipients of ICES advice, arrangements for providing advice, overall costs and realized income

4.1 Recipients of ICES advice

Currently, there are five main recipients of ICES advice:

1. European Union (EU)
2. ICES Member Countries
3. North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)
4. North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)
5. OSPAR Commission

Requests from HELCOM are not regular, and are to a large extent conducted as part of HELCOMs externally financed projects.

4.2 Arrangements for providing advice

Most of the advice arrangements are laid down in Memoranda of Understanding between ICES and the recipient of advice. The MoUs describe the advice deliverables and the costing. All recipients have accepted ICES 100% cost recovery policy.

Below is a more specific description of the MoUs with the different ICES advice recipients.

European Union

ICES has an annual MoU with EU that outlines the working arrangements in a given year. The MoU defines deliverables for recurrent advice requests, including a list of stocks covered by the recurrent advice requests and ICES support to the EU data collection, which includes the maintenance of the DATRAS and RDB databases. The MoU, also, defines procedures for special requests. Within the European Commission there are two main recipients of the advice: DG MARE (Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) and DG Environment.

Although the EU MoU with ICES concerns all EU institutions, the recurrent advice requests only concern DG MARE. The MoU contains a detailed description of the costing of recurrent advice:

- honorarium of ACOM leadership ;
- advisory staff ;

- staff to support the EU Data Collection Framework ;
- staff working on DATRAS and RDB maintenance ;
- travel costs and per diem of Advice Drafting Groups, Review Groups and benchmark chairs and external reviewers ;
- honorarium of reviewers;
- cost of training course of DG MARE officials ;
- cost of the annual ACOM meeting (travel and per diem of the ACOM members) .

EU pays all eligible costs within a maximum of 10.4 million DKK, equivalent to approximately 1,4 million euro, for recurrent advice.

For special requests from DG MARE, EU only pays marginal costs in the form of travel and *per diem* for the experts attending Advice Drafting and Review Groups. Secretariat and ACOM leadership costs including overheads are assumed covered by the payment for recurrent advice.

For special requests from DG Environment payment covers salaries/honorarium, including overhead for secretariat staff and ACOM leadership, as well as honorarium for experts, and travel/*per diem*.

The recurrent advice is essentially single stock advice, by-catch including seabirds and mammals, and impacts on bottom habitats. The budget for recurrent advice also includes costs in support of the EU Data Collection Framework Regulation (ICES databases: DATRAS-fisheries independent data, and RDB-fisheries dependent data), and training courses organized for DG MARE staff, and other stakeholders.

ICES Member Countries

On request, ICES provides recurrent/special request advice to ICES Member Countries.

The costs claimed for recurrent/special request advice to Member Countries covers marginal cost of the advisory process (i.e. travel and per diem of experts), and the respective salary time of ICES staff and ACOM leadership, including overhead.

A MoU between Norway and ICES has been concluded, for the provision of recurrent and special request advice, including aquaculture topics. The annual payment under the MoU covers recurrent advice delivered to Norway in the Barents Sea and the Greater North Sea ecoregions, which consist of:

- honorarium of ACOM leadership;
- advisory staff;
- travel costs and per diem of Advice Drafting Groups, Review Groups and benchmark chairs and external reviewers;
- cost of the annual ACOM meeting (travel and per diem of the ACOM members).

Special requests are subject to separate costing.

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO)

The MoU with NASCO was last updated in 2007. The MoU defines recurrent advisory deliverables and the process for special request advice.

In accordance with the MoU NASCO pays a fixed annual price for the recurrent advice, DKK 535.741 in 2015, and 100% of the costs, including overheads of special request advice. In 2015 NASCO paid for the following cost categories:

- a) Standard (recurrent) advice (i.e. advisory staff salaries)
- b) ACOM Leadership
- c) Quality assurance (i.e., review and advice drafting)
- d) Special advice request 100 % of costs (eligible costs are specified in the MoU and includes overhead)

The recurrent advice is essentially an assessment of the status of salmon stocks, including an overview of conservation and management measures in the North Atlantic, as well as in the areas of the three regional commissions (North American Commission, West Greenland Commission, and North East Atlantic Commission).

North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)

The MoU with NEAFC was last updated in 2007. The MoU defines recurrent advisory deliverables and the process for special advice requests.

The financial agreement with NEAFC is similar to the one with NASCO. NEAFC pays a fixed annual price for the recurrent advice and 100% of the costs of special request advice. The MoU identifies eligible costs. Overheads are included. The MoU does not specify an allocation of the fixed price to activities. The total amount paid by NEAFC was in 2015 2.3 million DKK.

The recurrent advice is essentially single stocks advice and advice on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs).

OSPAR Commission

ICES MoU with OSPAR was last updated in 2007. The MoU defines a) scientific information and advice and b) data handling activities. Specifications of these two items are agreed annually, with a trend lately to increase the amount allocated for data services. There are no recurrent advice requests. The special advice requests, included to the regular working programme cover a range of different issue, from fishing intensity and pressure mapping to validity of data used for indicators in assessments.

OSPARs payment is agreed annually pending on the activities agreed. The budget calculation includes:

- i. ACOM leadership/meeting and Secretariat staff salaries;
- ii. Travel and per diem of experts involved in the review and advice drafting;
- iii. Travel of ACOM leadership and ICES secretariat staff to attend OSPAR meetings (agreed in advance);
- iv. Overheads.

HELCOM

The MoU with HELCOM was last updated in 1999. The MoU defines scientific information and advice, and includes overheads. A separate data handling contract is agreed, normally with a three-year time-span.

The same principles as outlined above for Member States (with the exception for the recurrent process for Norway) have been implemented for HELCOM advice requests.

4.3 Overall costs and realized income for the ICES Advisory system

The tables below shows the realized income and the actual cost for the delivery of recurrent advisory products (2015 figures), including data services, as well as the estimated figures for 2016.

Table 1 Overview of realized income and costs for recurrent advice, in million DKK – for 2015

Client	Income	Direct costs	Indirect costs	Total costs	Balance
EU	10,4	12,0	2,5	14,5	- 3,9
NEAFC and NASCO	2,9	2,5	0,6	3,1	-0,2
Total	13,3	14,5	3,1	17,6	-4,1

Table 2 Overview of estimated income and costs for recurrent advice, in million DKK – for 2016

Client	Income	Direct costs	Indirect costs	Total costs	Balance
EU	10,4	11,8	2,0	13,8	- 3,4
NEAFC, NASCO and Norway	3,7	3,0	0,6	3,6	+0,1
Total	14,1	14,8	2,6	17,4	-3,3