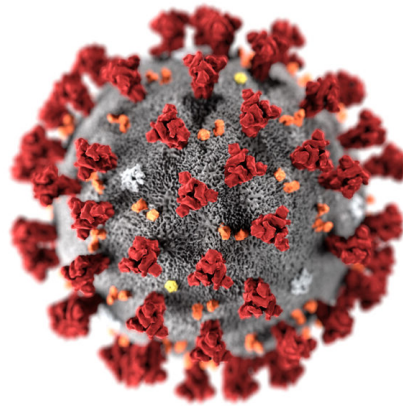


Bureau Council Sub Group on COVID-19 - (BCSGC19)

Final Draft Report Summary Only



(FINAL Version 6 with Summary @ 3 September 2021)

COVID-19 will be remembered as the virus that stopped the world.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimate that globally, there have been 218 million cases on COVID-19, with 4.53 million deaths and 5,289 million vaccines administered.

WHO – 3 September 2021.

*“When patterns are broken,
new worlds emerge.”*

Tuli Kupferberg

Summary

1. Objective of BCSGC19

The main objective of the Bureau Council Working Group on COVID-19 (BCSGC19) was to provide ICES with clear recommendations on how to prepare for a post-COVID-19 era. The outputs of TOR 4 provide 7 recommendations for consideration by ICES Bureau and Council as the organization prepares for the post pandemic era. The owner, implementer/implementation, resource requirements, and estimated costs are given for each recommendation.

2. Recommendation 1 - On a new paradigm for Expert Group work

- Operational Process Change - To reduce artificial logistical and time constraints imposed by packaging all information into a resolution, ICES should explore options for separating the resolution process and associated information management into modules along the following grouped elements: Terms of Reference; Approval of Chairs; Logistics of the work; Publicly communicate about the establishment of new groups and their outputs.
- This operational process change would primarily affect national delegates, expert group chairs, and the Secretariat and should be implemented over a 1–2 year timeframe, starting as soon as possible.
- Cultural Change - To refocus all aspects of Expert Groups towards a project approach that removes the paradigm of annual meetings being the sole central focus of work. Meetings will be a tool, not the sole element of an expert group. This reflects the organic change that is already happening across the network and will require adjustment of the procedures, reporting and overall management of expert groups.
- This cultural change would primarily affect expert group members and chairs, SCICOM and ACOM, with implications also for the Secretariat in supporting this. A cultural shift would take affect over a defined period, and likely linked to a cycle of ICES Strategic plan (3 years).
- **OWNER** – ACOM; SCICOM
- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – Secretariat
- **RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS** - 1 Position over 3 years (2022–2024)
- **ESTIMATED COSTS** – 0.5 position focused on Change Management + 0.5 position focused on Implementation – Cost = 435,000 DKK per annum. Additional Consultant Fees may be required = 350,000 DKK.

3. Recommendation 2 - On a Digital Collaboration Strategy (DCS)

- ICES should develop a digital strategy for collaboration (DCS) that outlines the key areas that the organization needs to offer IT solutions/services in, and what services it needs to offer within each area.
- The digital strategy should be relatively high level and focussed on managing informed technology choices for the organization rather than

specific technology/software offerings per se. It would build on existing agreements, principles, and policies.

- While it would be preferable to assign this task to an existing expert group or Committee, due to its cross-cutting nature, it would be appropriate to form a dedicated workshop to establish the strategy and also define the forward process for governance and review of the digital collaboration strategy.
- This should be started as soon as possible and an outline available for ICES Council in autumn 2022.
- Note strong links to TOR 3 – Training and Recommendation 4 (Develop GADEI Digital Support)

- **OWNER** - SCICOM
- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – Secretariat; Start with a series of workshops with stakeholders – Formation of core ICES DCS team – Training needs.
- **RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS** – 0.5 Person for 3 Years (2022–2024).
- **ESTIMATED COSTS** – 0.5 Person to support workshop, core team – and training. Cost = 220,000 DKK per annum.

4. Recommendation 3 - On the quality of ICES Advice and TAF

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in work pressures at home laboratories and at ICES Secretariat. This, along with other issues, has impacted ICES workload.

- In response to the stalled uptake and application of the Transparent Assessment Framework (TAF) throughout the assessment process, and the results of the recent survey of TAF users; home institutes must make time available for TAF implementation and training, with key messaging that this is a priority for ICES as a quality assured advice provider. It is recognized that COVID-19 has had a major impact on the TAF situation in that it has put severe pressure on the Secretariat and Member Countries.
- ACOM and WGTAFGOV will re-emphasise the role of TAF and prioritize guidance and online documentation and assistance/helpdesk which requires resourcing in the Secretariat).
- Secretariat to improve the functionality and technical set up (including to export directly into the Stock Assessment Graphs (SAG) database and implementation between years).

- **OWNER** - ACOM
- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – ACOM; Secretariat; WGTAFGOV; Member Countries.
- **RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS** - 1 Person for 3 Years.
- **ESTIMATED COSTS** - 1 Person focused on training and implementation of TAF particularly within Member Countries. Cost = 435,000 DKK per annum

5. Recommendation 4 – On gender awareness, diversity, equity, and inclusion (GADEI)

- Gender mainstreaming - Embed gender awareness, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the values and culture of ICES. Develop a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, revising and harmonizing the Code of Conduct and Meeting etiquette documents to foster a working culture that is respectful, diverse, and inclusive. Future work planning should account for diverse needs, with special attention to women, people with caring responsibilities, and other underrepresented groups
- Data collection - Systematically collect gender disaggregated data to aid monitoring, evaluation, and to identify areas where strategic actions are needed to support equity of access and opportunities in ICES work
- Training - Provide training on gender and diversity, equity, and inclusion to ICES community to foster a safer working environment, increased well-being, and equal opportunities

- **OWNER** - Council
- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – Bureau can address the gender awareness, diversity, equity and inclusion policy issue and drive this in all ICES work through the establishment of an ICES Gender Awareness, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative (GADEI)
- **RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS** – 1 Position for 3 years (2022–2024).
- **ESTIMATED COSTS** – 0.5 Position focused on Gender Mainstreaming and Training and 0.5 position focused on business intelligence and data collection = 435,000 DKK per annum.

6. Recommendation 5 – On the future of the Annual Science Conference (ASC)

- ICES will reflect on the future format of the ASC following the cancellation of the 2020 ASC due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The existing SCICOM ASC subgroup will “think outside the box” to explore existing and new formats by actively collecting experiences from ASCs, other conferences, and other communities. The goal will be to maintain the ASC as a key ICES “flagship event” and ensure that the key characteristics of the ASC (e.g. networking, partnerships, science exchange) are strengthened while at the same time increasing inclusiveness and reducing environmental impact.
- The lessons learned from the new formats at the upcoming ASC’s in Copenhagen 2021, Dublin 2022, and from the joint ICES/PICES conference in the US in 2023 will critically inform the discussions on the future evolution of the ASC.
- Provide resource means to effectively coordinate this process in the Secretariat.

- **OWNER** - SCICOM

- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – SCICOM; Secretariat; Member Countries.
- **RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS** – 1 position for two years (2022–2023).
ESTIMATED COSTS – 0.5 Position focused on lessons and new ASC formats. 0.5 position focused to support implementation of new formats at ASC 2022 = 435,000 DKK.

7. Recommendation 6 – The Secretariat post-COVID

- Workload - Given the increase in workload and new working norms resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. increased use of virtual meetings and support), the Secretariat sees a need for additional human and technical resources both in terms of staff and equipment/tools. Secretariat resource gaps have been identified and additional investments will need to be approved by Council.
- Meetings - There is clear need to reconfigure office space, meeting rooms, and working schedules to ensure that staff have the ability to support the network meetings without disrupting their colleagues. The move to the new headquarters should facilitate this.
- Human contact – the remote work period has led to reduced networking opportunities for ICES community, especially for early career scientists and new participants. Future planning should include a “hybrid” approach where both virtual and physical meetings form part of ICES meeting procedures.
- Work-life balance – Work-life balance has been significantly impacted by increased workload as well as meetings taking place outside normal working hours. Future planning in the Secretariat must factor in work-life balance and staff wellbeing.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the looming post-COVID era presents an opportunity for the Secretariat to review the match between its resources and its current work programmes.
- **OWNER** - Secretariat and Bureau
- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – Secretariat (with ACOM and SCICOM on how groups will operate).
- **RESOURCES** – Additional resources for the Secretariat, that address the COVID-19 impacts outlined above, have been identified and costed in Recommendation 1, 2, and 3.
- **ESTIMATED COSTS** – No additional costs.

8. Recommendation 7 – On the Zero Carbon Initiative

- While not specifically in the BCSGC19 TOR's, an important element of its work was to link with the Zero Carbon Initiative (Council Group on ZERO C Initiative).
- BCSGC19 has addressed some elements of the Zero Carbon Initiative TOR 2 (Travel and Remote meetings) and future work should build on this. The 13 actions in the Bill Turrell paper (2019), can also provide a useful starting point

(foundation) for the Zero C Initiative. BCSGC19 has considered actions 7, 8 (remote meetings), and 9 (science conferences).

- The group noted that many of its recommendations will have a positive impact on Net Carbon emissions (e.g. reduced air travel as a result of greater use of remote meetings).
- **ICES as a responsible/sustainable organization** - In the current marine policy landscape, ICES has a “moral responsibility” to minimize its energy usage while conducting its core business in the secretariat/science/advice/data domains. ICES should strive to minimize its energy usage and CO₂ footprint and “lead by example”. This is a key component of being a “sustainable and a responsible organization”. Other elements of a responsible/sustainable organization need to consider business health, employees, customers and impacts on nature.
- **Highlighting ICES Advice and Science outputs** – ICES should highlight the elements of its advice/science that will help reduce CO₂ emissions and energy usage in key marine sectors (e.g. via advice on marine spatial planning (MSP); offshore renewable energy (ORE) and shipping).
- Establish a Bureau Council Working Group that will revise the TOR of the Zero Carbon initiative. The group should work throughout 2022 and present their Draft Report to Council in 2022. The TOR should consider if ICES work processes and support progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals and ICES as a “Responsible Organization”.
- It should be noted that flexible working practices, such as working from home and remote meetings, are also a way to reduce CO₂ emissions generated from local communities.
- **OWNER** - Council
- **IMPLEMENTER/IMPLEMENTATION** – Bureau Council Working Group
- **RESOURCES** – Working Group Members.
- **ESTIMATED COSTS** – from current ICES budget.

9. Total estimated costs for implementation

The breakdown of the costs for each recommendation are shown on the table below in DKK. (Conversion Rate; 1 DKK = 0.13 €).

ITEM	2022 DKK	2023 DKK	2024 DKK	TOTAL DKK
Rec 1	785,000	785,000	785,000	2,355,000
Rec 2	222,000	222,000	222,000	666,000
Rec 3	435,000	435,000	435,000	1,305,000
Rec 4	435,000	435,000	435,000	1,350,000
Rec 5	435,000	435,000	435,000	1,350,000
Rec 6	0	0	0	0
Rec 7	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2,312,000	2,312,000	2,312,000	6,636,000

The Total Estimates Costs for new staff and external consultancy for implementation of the seven Recommendations is approximately 6,636,000 DKK (approximately € 901,680 over 3 years – approximately €300,560 per annum – approximately €15.028 per ICES Member Country per annum).

10. Introduction and background

The Introduction to this report looks at the global impact of COVID-19 on society and on organizations. It addressed 15 linked topics (a–o) that include the origin of the virus, the global crisis, how society has adapted, remote working, fatigue, impact on science and conferences, global fisheries, new technology, airlines, people, wellbeing, climate, and the future (i.e. the post-pandemic era). The key points from each topic are highlighted in bold. The Introduction is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the subject, but more to collate a broad range of information and expert opinion that was intended to prime discussion and ensured the group address its TOR in a comprehensive and insightful way.

11. Key global COVID-19 messages from the Introduction

Some key global messages from the Introduction topics that informed the Groups discussions included;

- *Organizations have had to adapt and pivot their operations swiftly in response to the changes imposed by the health risks of COVID19, as well as the economic impact of the ongoing restrictions.*
- *Quarantines, lockdowns, and self-imposed isolation have pushed tens of millions around the world to work from home, accelerating a workplace experiment that had struggled to gain traction before COVID19 hit.*
- *During the pandemic virtual meetings have increased in orders of magnitude, with hundreds of millions happening daily, as social distancing protocols have kept people apart physically. The term “Zoom fatigue” has become a popular expression to describe tiredness, worry, or burnout associated with the overuse of virtual platforms of communication, particularly videoconferencing.*
- *COVID-19 has impacted science. In a 2020 survey, there were substantial differences between male and female respondents in how the pandemic had affected their work. Female scientists and scientists with young dependents reported that their ability to devote time to their research has been substantially affected, and these effects appear additive: the impact is most pronounced for female scientists with young dependents.*
- *The COVID-19 pandemic leading to strictly enforced measures to stop the virus’s spread, resulted in an unprecedented number of scientific conferences cancelled in 2020 and 2021.*
- *Online meetings impose significant challenges concerning sustainable fisheries management, such as limited discussions and negotiations on important issues. Thus, to continue their work effectively, these organizations need to develop new decision-making procedures that are more resilient.*

- *According to a new McKinsey Global Survey of executives, companies have accelerated the digitization of their customer and supply-chain interactions and of their internal operations by three to four years. Additionally, the share of digital or digitally enabled products in their portfolios has accelerated by seven years.*
- *Business travel will take longer to recover, and even then, it is estimated that it will only likely recover to around 80% of pre-pandemic levels by 2024. Remote work and other flexible working arrangements are likely to remain in some form post-pandemic, resulting in fewer corporate trips.*
- *COVID-19 has brought about an enormous sense of uncertainty for most people. In the workplace, team members are looking up to leadership to make sense of what is happening and what it means for their job security, livelihoods and their families; forcing leaders to step up into being open and honest. In the immediate term employees will be looking for their leaders to be flexible, open to changes in work patterns, empathetic to personal situations, and to really listen.*
- *The COVID-19 pandemic has made it painfully clear that the wellbeing of the workforce is in jeopardy. Coaching and formal learning opportunities improve the ability of staff to problem solve, present, communicate, resolve conflict, and lead at work. In the same way, wellbeing should be treated as a business-critical skill that can be improved through training and development programs.*
- *It can be reasonably expected that the COVID-19 pandemic will abate. However, much work remains to be done in terms of public health measures to help control the pandemic, monitoring, potential revaccination and dealing with potential new variants.*
- *Government policies during the COVID-19 pandemic have drastically altered patterns of energy demand around the world. Many international borders were closed and populations were confined to their homes, which reduced transport and changed consumption patterns. Daily global CO2 emissions decreased by -17% (-11 to -25% for $\pm 1\sigma$) by early April 2020 compared with the mean 2019 levels, just under half from changes in surface transport.*
- *The business landscape will likely look a lot different after COVID-19. It would be a mistake to look for a one-size-fits-all plan. Every industry will face unique challenges. Some industries will be permanently damaged by what they have gone through. Other industries will benefit from changed conditions and attitudes. In any case, businesses that meet these changes with innovative thinking will have the best chance of prospering.*

12. Addressing TOR 1

TOR 1 focused on the lessons learned by ICES during the pandemic. These are the key lessons learned from 2020 and 2021 when virtual meetings dominated ICES landscape and had significant impacts on ICES staff workload.

- Online meetings take longer to prepare and it is difficult to deal with complex, strategic, and contentious issues.
- Online meetings make it difficult to sense the mood of the network and lack the incentives of physical meetings.
- The shift to online meetings has allowed for more frequent meetings throughout the year, as opposed to concentrated work in short periods.
- Online meetings are shorter and more focussed and attract greater participation.
- The tendency to postpone decisions, or delay the closure of work/activities has become more common in all areas of ICES business, including advice production.
- ICES needs to maintain an initial list of meetings to be conducted physically, on-line and in physical/on-line format. Furthermore, ICES should develop guidance on how to identify the characteristics of meetings that are better online, physical or a combination of both (e.g. meetings that demand wide participation and are focused on one way communication – like WGCHAIRS – are well suited to be facilitated completely online in future (with opportunistic physical meetings at the ASC). Meetings on sensitive or contentious issues may need physical meetings.
- Understanding and agreeing on the Secretariat support given to the different types of meetings, and the resource demands this creates, in the light of a potential increase of meetings is a critical consideration for the future (Secretariat resource needs).
- Potential future physical/online meetings need to ensure equal opportunity for remote participants to contribute and interact as those present in the room.
- Understanding the training needs for the different meeting formats, considering specific issues, and setting priorities - the audience for the training and the timing of that training should be decided based on challenges of specific meeting formats. ICES is moving its IT to the Cloud, the COVID19 pandemic has accelerated this move, which also implies more acute and variable demands on the IT/ICES budget, and on human resources to implement and adapt processes to the changes.

13. Addressing TOR 2

The outputs from TOR 2 have provided information on the views of the Delegates of 10 ICES Member Countries in relation to COVID-19. The following Member Countries provided feedback to the BCSGC19 – UK, Poland, Germany, Spain, Norway, Iceland, US, France, Ireland, and Latvia. This

represents the Delegates views of 50% of ICES Member States. A consolidated summary of this feedback is presented below.

Views on the impacts

- (1) There is a recognition that the pandemic will change the work practices of home institutes and their working processes with ICES.
- (2) In many ICES Member Countries, fieldwork (sampling and surveys) were severely disrupted or postponed. Laboratory work was less severely impacted. The impact of disrupted sampling on fisheries data will become apparent as ICES delivers advice for 2022 and 2023.
- (3) Fishery-dependent data collection activities were impacted differently at a regional level. There were also delays in responding to data calls in some Member Countries.
- (4) Some Member Countries increased their socio-economic data collection activity.
- (5) The pros and cons of virtual meetings were highlighted by all Member Countries. Virtual meetings are not effective in dealing with sensitive issues and participants from different time zones cause logistical problems. ICES scientists adapted quickly to the rapid move from physical to remote meetings. Staff fatigue (i.e. Teams and Zoom fatigue) was a feature of some MCs responses.
- (6) Other areas negatively impacted in Member Countries were grant proposals, conferences (hosting and attendance - ASC) networking, teaching, mentoring, research (e.g. PhD's) and "in person meetings".
- (7) The negative impact of COVID-19 on career progression was also highlighted in some Member Countries responses.
- (8) The negative and positive impacts on working from home (remote working) featured in most Delegates responses. Issues related to home internet access and bandwidth were also highlighted.
- (9) The decline in mental health and wellbeing of staff was also highlighted.
- (10) The negative impacts of the COVID-19 response were most evident for women in full-time employment, and in scientists with disabilities.

Views on the future

- (1) All Member Countries have recognized the need for new work practices and clear guidelines for staff that embrace new working norms around flexible working, mentoring, training, mental health, and wellbeing as we all enter an increasingly virtual workplace.
- (2) There is a need to find new ways of informal networking within the marine science and broader science communities
- (3) Ensure access to online conferences, seminars, meetings and continuous learning activities.
- (4) Ensure the impacts of COVID-19 do not negatively impact on career progression and recruitment.
- (5) Travel (both domestic and international) will be restricted having positive benefits in home laboratories travel budgets and general CO2 emissions.
- (6) The need for face to face meetings is necessary for key discussions.
- (7) IT will have a major role to support technology choices by Member Countries in the new virtual ICES workspace.
- (8) ICES meetings and intercessional work need to be "redesigned" (separate out intercessional work; discussion; sensitive decisions; incorporation of webinars; new IT tools to facilitate new ways of working).
- (9) Address some of the TOR of ICES Expert Groups through webinars.

14. Addressing TOR 3

Training required to support the BCSCC19 recommendations

Supporting BCSGC19 Recommendation 1 - The suggested change of how a multi-year ICES Expert Groups will work in future, as well as the need to accommodate more online meetings, effectively balance meetings that will be a mix of physical and remote attendees, and the increasing use of different workflows and processes, requires specific tools, skills, and competences to ensure equitable participation, good cooperation, community building and efficiently working together while being considerate of human well-being. The remote nature of meetings and workflows might also exacerbate intercultural differences in working and communication style.

Supporting BCSGC19 Recommendation 2: General challenges are related to running meetings (online and mixed physical/online), organizing the work and workflows, and more broadly on onboarding new people, building community, driving innovation and making decisions. These challenges can be partly addressed by using tools and partly only through strengthening skills in how to lead a change in work culture, and organize dispersed groups and workflows. Training on intercultural competences will help to facilitate working in an international setting.

Supporting BCSGC19 Recommendation 3: The introduction of TAF was meant to support the work of Assessment groups and to open up resources for more science within the groups. To achieve this, the implementation needs to be supported by active training of stock assessors and stock coordinators.

Supporting BCSGC19 Recommendation 4: Gender mainstreaming, the active consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion and ensuring a respectful and open work culture requires awareness training for the community as well as special training for secretariat staff and community leaders to be able to handle cases of misbehaviour and harassment competently and confidently.

Supporting BCSGC19 Recommendation 5: Depending on the future formats of the ASC, training needs to be provided to session conveners to enable them to effectively run sessions in virtual settings, both in terms of technical skills for the use of tools as well as moderation skills and to secretariat staff to develop and implement new formats effectively.

Wellbeing

- Wellbeing aspects of work life need to be considered at all levels of ICES community, fostering an equitable and inclusive working environment that allows contributions regardless of different individual realities.
- Develop training material, in the form of in-person short courses and recorded materials to address key aspects ICES community wellbeing. Including

effective leading of meetings, organization of workflows, as well as training on skills ensuring social interaction and community building.

- As with the recommendations on gender awareness, diversity, equity, and inclusion; wellbeing should be embedded in the values and culture of ICES.