

Ms. Charlina Vitcheva  
Director-General for  
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE)  
European Commission  
Rue Josef II 99  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, Zoetermeer, 14 May 2021  
NSAC Ref. No.: 14-2021

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

**Subject: Request for updated scientific information on skates and rays**

In 2020 the North Western Waters Advisory Council and the North Sea Advisory Council set up a joint Focus Group on Skates & Rays in order to develop advice to Commission and the Member States on improving management of skates and rays. The group meets regularly and has produced several advice documents to the Commission and the Member States over the course of its existence, including an annual update on its advice on best practice measures which was submitted to the respective Member States on 27 April ([link](#)).

To advance its ongoing work on harmonised management measures for skates and rays in the North Sea and North Western Waters, the joint Focus Group Skates & Rays would like to request specific support from the Commission regarding the following items:

- a) a synthesis of existing European, national and regional management measures in place in European Atlantic waters;
- b) an overview of the potential advantages and disadvantages of size restrictions;
- c) the current group-TAC for skates and ray and evaluate the potential advantages of having different TACs for different species or groups of species (e.g. one for thornback ray and another one for all the other species)

These issues were identified during the recent SUMARiS project and initially addressed at the 2017 STECF Expert Group. We suggest, building on the suggestions made by the STECF EG, and the progress made in the past 3 years, the following:

- a) A request to ICES to:
  - provide a synthesis of existing European, national and regional management measures in place in European Atlantic waters;
  - provide a brief overview of the potential advantages and disadvantages of size restrictions

Further, recognising the fact that the current temporary exemption to the Landing Obligation will have to be reviewed in the near future, we suggest:



- b) A request to the Commission to:  
facilitate a collaborative ICES/STECF workshop on future skate and ray management options

We look forward to your response and thank you for the collaboration we continue to receive from the EC, which is crucial for our work.

Yours sincerely,



Emiel Brouckaert  
Chairman  
NWWAC Executive Committee



Kenn Skau Fisher  
Chairman  
NSAC Executive Committee

