

REPORT

Meeting: **ICES Workshop on Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan (WKSTIMP)**

Parties: **ICES, stakeholders (Tamara Talevska for NSAC)**

Date: **16-18 May 2023**

Location: **Zoom/Copenhagen**

Chairs: **Marta Ballesteros (Spain), Ashley Wilson (UK) and Alexandre Rodriguez (Spain)**

Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska**

The WKSTIMP workshop focused on operationalization of [ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy \(SES\)](#). Building on the work of [WKSHOES](#) and the establishment of ICES SES in 2023, the workshop aimed to identify the practical actions necessary to achieve the strategy's vision and goals:

Goal 1: Ensure input from various communities of knowledge so that essential knowledge from relevant disciplines and actor groups is incorporated into ICES science and advice.

Goal 2: Engage stakeholders and advice requesters to develop and deliver current and future advice products for the changing priorities of managing marine activities.

Goal 3: Increase legitimacy, ownership, and accountability for the creation of knowledge.

Goal 4: Facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration when addressing operational, tactical, and strategic challenges, thus enhancing innovation and social learning.

The workshop was split into two parts. The first part took place on **16 May** online, followed by two days of meetings at ICES Headquarters in Copenhagen on **17–18 May**. A hybrid session took place on 18 May. The workshop helped to produce protocols and guidelines for effective and transparent stakeholder engagement with ICES community, whilst ensuring the independence and credibility of ICES science and advice.

Experts with knowledge in stakeholder participation, as well as a diverse set of stakeholders including members of the EU Advisory Councils, regional fisheries groups and environmental commissions, competent authorities of ICES member countries, observers, and other interested stakeholders participated. Through collaborative effort, WKSTIMP identified practical implementation options, draft elements of the stakeholder engagement implementation plan, and discuss appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure accountability and continuous organizational learning.

ICES SES identified 4 different stakeholder roles: expert (science-related groups), observer, contributor (stakeholder participating in workshops), partner (i.e. advice requesters and recipients; MIACO/MIRIA). Participants to WKSTIMP were contributors,

as they contributed to building of the implementation plan with their knowledge, experience and observations.

Implementation Plan sets out how the SES will be put in motion. Based on workshop outcomes it will address:

- a) how to maintain and encourage engagement.
- b) follow-up actions to address barriers and increase the equity of access and participation.
- c) facilitating and standardizing the reporting, supporting the monitoring and evaluation.

On day 1, participants were split into breakout groups to discuss any questions/challenges about the clarity or comprehensiveness of the workshop goals, agenda, and TORs, and propose solutions to address these questions/challenges. Some of the issues identified were:

- a) Language in TORs should be clearer and jargon explained so that everybody is on the same page (especially considering the mix of social and natural scientists)
- b) Define better the goals of the workshop versus the goals of the Strategy
- c) Clarify if engagement is limited to ICES engagement with stakeholders or engagement that happens outside ICES as well
- d) SES must be adapted to the type of stakeholders ICES is interacting with (different strategies for different groups)
- e) Use case studies to describe different roles and occasions where confusions took place
- f) Address the issue of participants wearing different hats (place responsibility to identify representation with participants)
- g) Clarify how stakeholder participation in ICES WGs is managed (which participants are allowed to which type of meetings)
- h) Use stakeholder analysis systematically to target all the relevant stakeholder groups
- i) The ToR should be adjusted to include the discussion about 'stakeholder information' in the ICES advice and a way forward
- j) Pre-workshop preparatory meeting to bring everyone up to speed with the background
- k) Stakeholder information on marine environment relevant to ICES advice through i.e. science partnerships need to be better and systematically integrated in the ICES WGs.

A presentation entitled "Animals, elephants and monsters" was held, analysing the current SES. The insights were as follows:

- Not all animals are equal – be concrete which stakeholders for which process in ICES
- Describe why SES and what issues this aims to solve (elephants in the room)
- Careful not to create a paper process (monster); not a goal in itself.

ICES was identified as boundary organisation, meaning it exists between science and policy, and identified three important attributes: a) Credibility: how believable, b) Saliency: how relevant, c) Legitimacy: how acceptable (is ICES).

Since marine governance is tackling wicked problems it needs to be, by default, interactive. However, one must be careful not to create ‘paper monsters’ by requesting scientists and chairs to set a rationale for stakeholder engagement and assess outcome for every process. Important is also to uphold legitimacy of ICES work, which might in some cases (such as EBM) be challenged. Trust was also highlighted, which, quoting Pim Visser “comes in walking and runs away on a horse”. Opportunistic behavior of some stakeholders might erode this trust and represents an ‘elephant in the room’, which must be addressed. Trust, credibility and legitimacy are interlinked. This can be improved by systematic engagement of stakeholders, with clear objectives and desired outcomes by understanding where stakeholders are needed and what is expected of them (e.g. data collection, advice interpretation etc). Citizens’ and marginalised communities’ involvement in ICES processes was also discussed and it was proposed to work on the concept of ICES literacy (stakeholders as ‘ICES literate’ – understanding the structure, processes and principles of ICES).

ICES SES principles are as follows:

1. Consistent with impartiality, independence and integrity of ICES
2. Communication is aligned with the strategy
3. Opportunities for engagement are inclusive and proportional
4. Roles, responsibilities and expectations are transparent and respected.
5. Organisational learning through monitoring and assessment.

A presentation was held on Stakeholder engagement in ICES, acknowledging that the concept is increasingly important and occurring. A timeline of stakeholder engagement from 1980 to 2022 was outlined through processes of observer policies, dialogues and pilot schemes. Formalization of SE was initiated in 2022 with ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (launched in 2023, outlining the scope, context and rationale for engagement, as well as roles and responsibilities.

On day 2, participants were split into breakout groups which were tasked with identifying, in the role of one of the 4 participant groups, the actions that would operationalise the SES. These actions included, among others:

1. Invite stakeholders who can provide additional evidence/data to address scientific assessment needs (data needs notification procedure i.e. through MIACO, mail notifications etc. See also WKENSURE: Workshop on developing guidance for ensuring the integrity of scientific information submitted to ICES by data providers)
2. Identify organisations that represent stakeholders and use them to identify relevant contributors (stakeholder mapping, call for stakeholders application with screening procedure in place)
3. Keep in mind equity and power relations
4. Encourage involvement of contributors to advice request development and review (recurring and special requests) – outside of ICES control, but benefits ICES SES.
5. Organise participatory workshop with key stakeholders before/after the working group/workshop to manage expectations and streamline work in WG/WK
6. Quality control (criteria) of stakeholder participants
7. Sense checking the advice with appropriate stakeholder engagement before finalizing the advice (both in terms of quality and in terms of readability)
8. Agreed action points should be circulated shortly after the MIACO and followed up consistently.
9. Address language barriers (i.e. translation service provided by ACs)
10. Organise a specific conference session on outreach theories, methods and innovation
11. Advertise possibility to assume ICES observer role and inform about the stakeholder fatigue resulting from engagement in too many ICES processes.
12. Identify avenues where created and creative blindness happens (intended omission of data to manipulate result/advice)

Subsequently, the actions were unfolded by including an explanatory paragraph with context and marked whether they were considered already existing (BAU – Business as Usual, and linked to existing structures) or new actions that need to yet be implemented.

One of the guiding principles when designing the actions was what Marloes Kraan called (paper) monsters, in the sense that actions should not create significant administrative burden for the Chairs of a particular working group or workshop. It was proposed that “bare minimum requirements” for Chairs are imposed, such as a short section in the Terms of Reference, whether the Chairs are planning to engage with stakeholders and which stakeholders. Those Chairs who are keen on providing more information are welcome to, but the bare minimum requirements will be mandatory to create a baseline upon which stakeholder engagement can be monitored and assessed.

Breakout groups were designed to tackle the issues of:

- 1) Ethics, data protection and informed consent,

- 2) Conflict of Interest: potential and perceived
- 3) Transparency and unforeseen issues

On day 3, ICES training programme was presented. ICES Training Group meets in autumn each year to prepare programme for next year. Over 70 trainings have been offered since 2009, on topics such as Introduction to stock assessments, Scientific writing and publishing, Analysis and visualisation of VMS data, Social Science methods for natural scientists etc. Currently there is capacity for maximum 10 courses per year, which are a mix of tactical and strategic courses.

In relation to this, the following actions were proposed:

- ICES literate training
- Engagement software
- Engagement training
- Monitoring and evaluation for organisational learning
- WGENGAGE (a new WG that would promote cultural change: from closed science to open ICES)

A presentation was held on Monitoring and Assessment.

Proposal to avoid administrative burden: Bare minimum monitoring and evaluation system:

- a) Quantity and quality of engagement (year1)
- b) Measure the effectiveness of engagement (year 2)
- c) Fully fledged monitoring system (year 3)

The workshop will present a detailed report on the development of a stakeholder engagement implementation plan and any further steps to ACOM and SCICOM by the 30th June.

Important for NSAC:

- Actions listed in this report may or may not be adopted by ICES ACOM and SCICOM – they are proposals.
- NSAC proposed to revive the idea of ACs/stakeholder involvement in advice request processes. Acknowledging that this might meet rejection, it was felt by the participants that the momentum is right as opening up request processes would benefit ICES SE and its final products. NSAC was supported in its proposal to draft letter/advice to the Commission citing the existing literature on the importance of

SE in (marine) governance and science and the WKSTIMP report once adopted. It is important to note that while we may reference WKSTIMP report (as it does not necessarily reflect ICES opinion), we shall not reference ICES as such.

- As one of the proposed actions, MIACO might be presented with the idea for ICES to outline an overview of future efforts in data collection planned for each subsequent year with an aim to identify data gaps and foster collaboration with industry in good time before such data is needed for analysis.
- With view to streamline stakeholder engagement practices there was a discussion on the relevance and rationale of MIAC meetings, as these mostly entail responses to AC questions that are readily available in ICES products.
- WKSTIMP was interested in receiving NSAC report on stakeholder engagement in MSP processes once finalized.