



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

Director-General

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Mr Iain MacSween
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Mr Sam Lambourn
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Dear Mr MacSween and Mr Lambourn,

Thanks for your comment regarding the MoU with ICES. We have indeed, as you note, taken nearly all your earlier comments onboard in the MoU text and we are grateful, of your appreciation of that.

The outstanding issue is your request for a facility for RACs to 'be able to put forward specific and well-defined research requests directly to ICES. To cover these requests, the budget should contain specified allocated funds.

The Commission recognises that ICES and RACs are independent bodies who are free to engage in whatever arrangements they find appropriate. The Commission does thus not want in any way to interfere if the RACs want to send requests for advice to ICES on basis of a direct agreement between the RACs and ICES.

However, we have some serious concerns for requests to ICES to be supported through the MoU between the Community and ICES.

One concern is formal, that the Commission cannot make open financial commitments whereby a budget is left open for external parties to dispose for purposes which are not specified at the time of commitment. An arrangement with a financial facility for RAC requests would in any case have to include a formal commitment procedure whereby the request would have to be sent to the Commission which would then make the financial commitment and forward the request to ICES.

However, notwithstanding this problem, the Commission is very concerned about the need to use the resources of the scientific community, which already are overstretched, effectively. It would thus not be effective use of these scarce and precious resources if we came into a situation where parallel requests regarding similar issues or even the same issue are submitted to ICES, thus requiring ICES to respond simultaneously to slightly different questions. For the sake of effective use we also need to ensure a prioritised time schedule of requests coming through the MoU.

Our solution to these problems is therefore that RACs send their proposals for requests for scientific advice to the Commission and we will then ensure that such requests are responded to by incorporation of requests into the mechanisms for requests for advice which we have. This may imply some coordination with other requests, prioritisation and also that requests may be sent to other advisory bodies such as STECF. The purpose of these arrangements is solely to ensure efficiency and not to censor requests from the RACs.

I will also mention that the MoU includes facilities to support ICES presence to present advice at RAC meetings. While the main purpose of this is to ensure that the existing advice is explained and discussed, such meetings can of course also be used to discuss various options and issues related to the advice which may not constitute formal advice from ICES but which we nevertheless think would be useful as a way for the RACs to get further input from the scientific community.

I hope these facilities will meet your requirements.

Jörgen Holmquist
(signed)

Cc: E. Mastracchio, M. Papaioannou, R. Priebe, P. Degnbol, M. Garcia Ferrer,
S. Frère