

(3) Some thoughts from a SCICOM representative

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Attending ICES Scientific Committee (SCICOM) meetings always makes me start reflecting on the diversity of ICES; this from a content point of view but not surprisingly even more so from a participant point of view. With more than 5000 scientists from over 700 marine institutes in 20 member countries and beyond allocated to 200+ expert groups and committees, ICES unites a huge diversity in expertise, expectations and viewpoints. You can hence imagine it is quite a challenge to overview ICES' complexity and grasp it with both hands, but that is exactly what SCICOM tries to achieve. Questions like how to best integrate all that into a logic Science Plan without losing focus on the ICES Mission, how to best organise an Annual Science Conference that is appealing to the whole community, how to stimulate interest and particularly participation in what we are doing, how to balance the top-down advice-oriented and the unrestrained bottom-up workload of expert groups, how to balance fisheries and wider ecosystem-level work, how to position the Community in the international science, management and policy landscape,... are all fundamental to SCICOM's work. Worth some further consideration, I would say, and that is exactly what I want to share with you...

(4) Working Group on Methods for Estimating Discard Survival (WGMEDS): How discard survival research is shaping European policy?

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With the phasing in of the Landing Obligation law between 2015 and 2019, and its exemption rule of "high survival", a need was established for stakeholders to scientifically demonstrate whether any species that is commercially caught-and-discarded stands a chance to survive this process. To guide practitioners in the field with collecting data, an ICES workshop (now working group, WGMEDS) was set up upon request by the European Commission. Since 2015, exemptions are being put forward by member states, judged and put into legislation within discard plans and delegated acts. How does this matter for European fisheries management?

[Work related to ICES via WGMEDS \(Working Group on Methods for Estimating Discard Survival\)](#)

(5) Working Group on Fisheries Benthic Impact and Trade-offs (WGFBIT): Trading off benthic impacts and fisheries through integrative modelling

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For striving towards a more sustainable fishery, one of the major challenges, i.e. flatfish-directed beam trawling, is to comply to the requirements to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the seafloor (D6, seafloor integrity), as defined in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD D6 on Seafloor integrity). Potential fisheries measures to achieve GES of the seafloor may include gear-based technical measures (e.g. alternative catch stimulation, less-bottom contacting gear components), habitat quota regulation or spatial management measures. The assessment of the effectiveness of management scenarios requires both a quantitative assessment framework to assess the benthic impact of bottom-contacting fishing gears as well as an approach to evaluate the impact on the fisheries.

A quantitative framework to assess benthic impact by bottom-contacting fishing gears was developed in the EU BENTHIS project and further developed in the ICES Workshops WKBENTH, WKTRADE and WKSTAKE and working group FBIT (2018 onwards). Three main components are taken into account: fishing pressure (footprint) and benthic habitat sensitivity. Fishing pressure is assessed on a fine-scale spatial grid (0.05 by 0.05 degrees). Pressure is estimated from the fishing effort (swept area ratio) in combination with abrasion (characterised by penetration depth). Penetration depth directly relates to