

Instructions for submitting Observer reports

Introduction

This document provides the reporting template and instructions for Observers to report during the 2023 - 2025 **Norwegian Chairship** of the Arctic Council.

The deadline for submission is **1 December 2024**.

Role of Observers

The role and responsibilities of Observers, as well as criteria for admission to the Arctic Council, can be found in the "Arctic Council Rules of Procedure" (Annex 2) and the "[Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies](#)."

The primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Observers contribute to the Arctic Council primarily through engagement at the level of Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Observers are invited to the meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council unless the Senior Arctic Officials decide otherwise. Observers may also propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant.

Report submission

Observer reports should include the relevant information described below and in the template.

- (a) A description of the Observer's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council since the time of the Observer's most recent submission, or in the previous two years, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants;
- (b) If applicable, a description of the Observer's future plans to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants; and,
- (c) If applicable, a description of the Observer's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered in the previous sections since the time of the Observer's most recent submission, or in the previous two years.

Observer reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: acs@arctic-council.org not later than **1 December 2024**. Please bear in mind while preparing your report that all Observer reports will be published online in the *Observer* section of the [Arctic Council online Library](#) (OAR) following the Chairship transition.

If an Observer fails to submit a report, the Arctic Council will consider this to mean that the Observer **is no longer interested in maintaining its status** as an accredited Observer to the Arctic Council.



Cover sheet

Full name of Observer State or Observer Organization:

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

Date of submission of regular report:

15 January 2025

Observer's website:

<https://www.ices.dk/Pages/default.aspx>

Information for appropriate contact person

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Observer Report

Please describe in no more than two pages your State's or Organization's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. Please detail any collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

Since becoming an observer to the Arctic Council in 2017, ICES has actively collaborated with the Arctic Council to develop and promote scientific understanding of the Arctic. ICES works jointly on many Arctic activities with its partner organization, the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES), this report also emphasizes joint ICES-PICES work and relevant PICES working group activities. Norway's Priorities for its Chairship of the Arctic Council have been highly synergistic with the priorities of ICES and PICES. As Questions regarding PICES activities can be directed to the official ICES observer contact listed above as well as to PICES Executive Secretary [Sonia Batten \(sonia.batten@pices.int\)](mailto:sonia.batten@pices.int).

ICES provides input to several Arctic Council working groups, including the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME), the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group (CAFF).

ICES co-sponsored and contributed to the 2024 International Symposium on Ecosystem Based Ocean Management that Norway organized as part of its Arctic Council Chairship. PICES approved a Study Group (SG) on the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific Gateways – SG-ARC to work through 2023 to consider ongoing Arctic activities. The SG met at PICES annual meeting in October 2023 and PICES created a new standing '[Advisory Panel](#) on the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific Gateways.' This new AP has responsibility for representing and coordinating within PICES and with its external collaborators, including ICES and the Arctic Council, to develop and support trans-disciplinary and collaborative approaches using co-production methods and inclusive of Indigenous knowledge systems to consider existing and future anthropogenically driven pressures, such as increased marine traffic, harmful algal blooms, non-indigenous species, noise, contamination, litter, and microplastics in the Pacific Arctic and its Gateways.

One area of ICES work that involves significant collaboration with Arctic Council's PAME Working Group is the implementation of Integrated Ecosystem Assessments (IEAs) by ICES Expert Groups (EGs). IEAs can be employed across the Arctic region to evaluate the state of Arctic ecosystems, to assess vulnerabilities, and to evaluate anthropogenic impacts, including shipping, future fisheries, contaminants, climate change, and the transport of invasive species.

At ICES, themed workshops and Annual Science Conference sessions are regularly convened to address specific IEA-related issues. Reports from IEA-related workshops are available to the public. IEAs also enable scientists and other stakeholders to review available data, define monitoring and research priorities/requirements, and identify appropriate management strategies. [ICES] network of IEA EGs provides an opportunity to share methods and guidance across Arctic ecoregions.

IEAs also provide the basis for [ICES Ecosystem Overviews \(https://www.ices.dk/advice/ESD/Pages/Ecosystem-overviews.aspx\)](https://www.ices.dk/advice/ESD/Pages/Ecosystem-overviews.aspx). Developed through a system of client/stakeholder-involved workshops, Ecosystem Overviews describe the ecosystems, identify anthropogenic pressures, and explain how those pressures affect key ecosystem components. ICES IEA EGs have compiled Ecosystem Overviews for [ICES Ecoregions \(https://www.ices.dk/advice/ESD/Pages/Ecosystem-overviews.aspx\)](https://www.ices.dk/advice/ESD/Pages/Ecosystem-overviews.aspx) of relevance to the Arctic, including: Barents Sea, Icelandic waters, Greenland Sea, Norwegian Sea, and Central Arctic Ocean. A new version of the [Barents Sea IEA \(https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.18667634.v1\)](https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.18667634.v1)



Together with PICES and PAME, ICES Working Group on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the Central Arctic Ocean (WGICA) published the [Central Arctic Ocean Ecosystem Overview](https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21731240) (<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21731240>) in 2022. This was a crucial step towards providing scientific information and contextual advice on issues which may impact the region in the future, such as potential fisheries and shipping routes. WGICA will continue to communicate its knowledge as international scientific and management processes progress.

In 2023, ICES supported the Second International Symposium on Plastics in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic Region in Reykjavik, Iceland, which gathered scientific, local and Indigenous knowledge about plastic pollution and facilitated discussion of methods to reduce the impact of plastics on Arctic ecosystems.

Another area of ICES work relevant to PAME is the work of ICES Working Group on Ballast and Other Ship Vectors (WGBOSV). WGBOSV has developed measures for reducing the risk of transporting non-native species via shipping in conjunction with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). WGBOSV published its [most recent report in 2024](#), which can be accessed via [ICES library website](https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Joint_ICES_IOC_IMO_Working_Group_on_Ballast_and_Other_Ship_Vectors_WGBOSV_/26064559?file=47138953) ([https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Joint ICES IOC IMO Working Group on Ballast and Other Ship Vectors WGBOSV /26064559?file=47138953](https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Joint_ICES_IOC_IMO_Working_Group_on_Ballast_and_Other_Ship_Vectors_WGBOSV_/26064559?file=47138953)). A new terms of reference has recently been developed for the next three years.

ICES continues to serve as [the thematic data centre for marine contaminants](#) under the Arctic Council's AMAP, ensuring that relevant data are quality assured and accessible. Our Working Group on Marine Litter (WGML) works closely with AMAP and their litter and microplastics expert group to define and harmonize monitoring approaches. WGML will meet again in May 2025.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

In 2025, WGICA will meet to revise ICES ecosystem overview for CAO. ICES will also have a presence at the *Fourth International Conference on Arctic Research Planning (ICARP IV)*, USA 2025, to continue its commitment to developing knowledge of the Arctic.

Both ICES and PICES recognize more effort is needed to provide opportunities for meaningful participation of Arctic Indigenous communities, including Arctic Indigenous people, and to ensure Indigenous Knowledge is respected and invited to participate in our relevant activities. Our joint UN Decade on Ocean Science program, SmartNet, has identified including different knowledge systems as a key goal. The ICES/PICES/PAME Working Group on Integrated Ecosystem Assessments for the Central Arctic Ocean (WGICA) and the ICES/PICES Working Group on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment of the Northern Bering Sea-Chukchi Sea include Indigenous Knowledge as a central element in their work. A 2-day workshop that included members of several Permanent Participants was held at the PICES-2023 annual meeting on collaborative and knowledge sharing approaches, including Indigenous Knowledge.

The workshop has three main objectives: 1) Bring together marine and coastal knowledge holders (including climate scientists, Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders, resource managers, and ocean practitioners) to showcase examples of successful partnerships, as well as new opportunities, and ongoing challenges in community-led approaches to support climate ready decision-making and ecosystem resilience. 2) Identify lessons learned from transdisciplinary and community-led work rooted in co-production. 3) Facilitate a cross regional knowledge network of coastal community leaders and ocean practitioners to provide continued support outside of the PICES annual meeting.

In December 2024, ICES General Secretary Alan Haynie attended the final events of the long-running Nansen Legacy Project, the Norwegian-led research project that aimed to develop a holistic understanding of the changing ecosystem and climate in the Arctic. General Secretary Haynie served as a member of the Project's [Reference Group of external advisors](#). Following the project's conclusion, ICES will ensure that the results of Nansen are promoted and taken up in ICES network, and that ICES EGs with an Arctic focus are aware of project outcomes.

In December 2024, ICES General Secretary Alan Haynie visited the Arctic Council Secretariat to meet AC leadership and discuss the organizations' joint priorities. ICES looks forward to expanding formal and informal collaboration in the future. Denmark's upcoming chairship of the Arctic Council (2025 – 2027) gives ICES an increased opportunity to contribute to the work of the Council.

ICES and PICES will remain involved in Arctic Council and other Arctic activities to promote collaboration across our scientific networks and the global marine science community.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.

. In April 2023, PICES and ICES co-sponsored the 5th Effects of Climate Change on the World's Ocean (ECCWO5) Symposium in Bergen. The ECCWO5 symposium convened experts from around the world to better understand climate impacts on ocean ecosystems, the ecosystem services that oceans provide; and the people, businesses and communities that depend on the world's oceans. The symposium highlighted the latest information on: how oceans are changing; what is at risk; responses that are underway; and strategies for increasing climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation. It aimed to identify key knowledge gaps, promote collaborations, and stimulate the next generation of science and actions. ECCWO5 included five theme sessions of specific relevance to the Arctic:

- Session 3: Assessing climate change vulnerability of marine and coastal areas and associated communities
- Session 4: Improving decision-making in response to change in marine-dependent coastal communities using transdisciplinary approaches
- Session 10: Beyond species on the move: emerging climate change impacts on the spatial dynamics of marine species, from detecting to forecasting and projecting'
- Session 13: Detectability of non-linearities, abrupt shifts and tipping points in marine ecosystems
- Session 14: Cumulative anthropogenic impacts on key Arctic species.

At the [September 2024 ICES Annual Science Conference \(ASC\)](#) held in Gateshead, UK, a number of [themed sessions](#) relevant to the Norwegian Chairship's ocean-related priorities were held, including sessions on:

ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) Sessions relevant to Norwegian Chairship Arctic Council Priorities	
Priority of Norwegian Chairship	Relevant ASC theme sessions
Develop tools for ocean management	Session D: Marine food webs and ecosystem-based management Session F: New avenues for incorporating ecosystem processes in models used for fisheries management Session L: evaluating ecosystem-based management performance: Examples of success (co-sponsored by PICES) I Accounting for climate change in marine spatial planning: Experiences and lessons learn



.ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) Sessions relevant to Norwegian Chairship Arctic Council Priorities	
Protect ice-dependent species and ecosystems	Session D: Marine food webs and ecosystem-based management Session E: Developing applied evidence for biodiversity conservation and management
Develop Arctic observation systems	Session A: From echoes to ecology: The application of active acoustics beyond biomass estimates Session N: The importance of operational oceanography in researching changing ocean
Take action to combat marine litter	Session C: How do we adapt our approach to deal with novel contaminants in the marine environment?
enhance knowledge about the Arctic climate and environment	P Climate impacts and adaptation responses in (co-sponsored by PICES)
Improve access to and use of research data	Moving the latest developments from machine learning and AI closer to exploiting mountains and lakes of data
Focus particularly on young people	ICES has a large range of early career scientist activities at all of our ASCs.
Continue work on gender equality and inclusion in the Arctic.	A proposal accepted for a Network Session for the 2025 Annual Science Conference: "Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA) for ICES: An examination of gender equity in marine science".

Norway's Arctic Council's Chairship priority to focus on measures to preserve marine biodiversity can be informed by recent ICES advice related to biodiversity. ICES has recently carried out an independent review of the NACES MPA for OSPAR. experts compiled the [nomination proforma](#) and ICES was then requested to carry out and independent review here:

[OSPAR - Review of the revised nomination proforma for the 'North Atlantic current and Evlanov seabasin' MPA in the OSPAR Maritime Area.](#)

ICES has also been advising **NEAFC** on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) within its ABNJ jurisdictional area and its closed areas in relation to OECM designation.

[New information on vulnerable habitats and fisheries activities in the NEAFC regulatory areas](#)

[NEAFC - Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures in relation to long-term biodiversity/ecosystem benefits of NEAFC's closed areas and areas restricted to bottom fishing \(replacing advice provided in October 2023 \)](#)

The [Working Group on Deep-water Ecology \(WGDEC\)](#) deals with the biology and conservation of deep-sea habitats in the North Atlantic and is a joint ICES-NAFO working group. ICES also maintains a VME database <https://vme.ices.dk>

Other Relevant Biodiversity Advice Products

- Bycatch roadmap <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.26003467>
- Oceanic Northeast Atlantic Ecosystem Overview <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.5754>
- Information on discarding in NEAFC <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21065530.v1> (to be updated shortly)
- State of fish stocks and fisheries in the ABNJ – Fisheries Overview - <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21646910>
- Identification of ecological special/valued areas in the Barents Sea including ABNJ <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.5354>
- Production of spatial data layers of fishing in areas relevant to future extraction of deep-sea minerals <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21602769.v1>
- Status and distribution of deep-water elasmobranchs <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7489>

CAOFA

All ICES member countries are represented within the 2018 Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA). As one of several CAOFA observers, ICES has participated in the Scientific Coordinating Group (SCG) and its various working groups: the Data Management Working Group (DM-WG); Data Sharing Protocol Working Group (DSP-WG, abolished 2024); Exploratory Fishing Questions Working Group (EFQ-WG, abolished 2024); and Mapping and Monitoring Working Group (MM-WG). While the MM-WG developed the implementation plan for the Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring (JPSRM) through 2023 and 2024, ICES and WGICA were identified as collaborators for data sharing and research and monitoring questions. ICES and WGICA will continue to collaborate on marine science in the central Arctic following the adoption of the JPSRM at the third CAOFA Conference of the Parties (COP), where ICES was also an observer. ICES will continue to work with our member countries and other parties to support the implementation of CAOFA.

Specific Projects

ICES and PICES are actively promoting inclusive practices and working to implement them. A greater focus on collecting demographic information for the ICES network is underway in line with the ICES Strategic Plan and the Gender Equality Plan that was approved by the ICES Council in 2022. Since 2021, PICES has been collecting voluntary, self-reported gender and indigenous identity information for members. PICES Working Groups have representation from all member nations to provide balanced geographic representation. Inclusion of Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOP) in PICES WGs has been prioritized since 2021.