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Our Ref: H.4/SLM/CP/RF/AV

3 June 2026

Subject: Data call 2026 related to bycatch of protected species for ICES advisory work

Dear Reader,

Please find enclosed a document describing the rationale, scope and technical details of the data call for ICES advisory work by the Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC).

ICES has a standing request from the European Commission (DG MARE and DGENV) to advise and inform on the impact of fisheries on the ecosystem. ICES currently provides advice on bycatch of endangered, threatened, and protected species and the requested data will be used by the ICES advisory groups involved in the provision of such advice.

ICES also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). Data gathered through this data call may be used to support recurring and special request advice to NEAFC on the state of marine ecosystems and human impacts.

For EU Member States, this data call is carried out in accordance with the relevant EU legislative framework including Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/967, Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, Council Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 (Common Fisheries Policy), Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 (Data Collection Framework), and Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2021/1167.

Please note that the list of species of bycatch relevance was updated in 2026 for all Northeast Atlantic ecoregions (Annex 1 to the data call). Atlantic salmon, European eel, and other fish species for which there is evidence of commercial landings are included as fish species of bycatch relevance.

For questions regarding the content of the data call or data submission, please contact:
data.call@ices.dk.

Sincerely,



Sarah Millar, Head of the Advice Department



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Contents

1. Scope of the Data Call	2
2. Rationale.....	2
3. Legal framework	2
4. Data license	3
5. Deadlines.....	3
6. Data to report	3
6.1 Geographic and temporal scope.....	3
6.2 Data types.....	3
7. Data submission.....	4
8. Contact information.....	5
9. References	5

WGBYC 2026: Data call 2026 related to bycatch of protected species for ICES advisory work

1. Scope of the Data Call

This data call aims to collate data describing fishing effort, monitoring/sampling effort, and bycatch event records of species of bycatch relevance from **2025**. These data will be used by the ICES Working Group on bycatch of protected species (WGBYC) to support the provision of ICES advice on the wider effects of fishing activities. The data may be used by other ICES or Joint ICES Expert Groups when the work of those expert groups contributes to ICES advisory processes and is in line with the *ICES roadmap for bycatch on endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species* (ICES, 2026).

2. Rationale

This data call aims to improve consistency and completeness in the reporting of bycatch data at a regional scale.

ICES has a standing request from the European Commission (DGMARE and DGENV) to advise and inform on the impact of fisheries on the ecosystem. ICES currently provides advice on the effects of fishing on a variety of protected and sensitive species (marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles and fish) and the requested data will be used by the ICES advisory groups involved in the provision of such advice.

ICES also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). Data gathered through this data call may be used to support recurring and special request advice to NEAFC on the state of marine ecosystems and human impacts.

When possible, the data will be used to provide summaries of bycatch rates by species, gear type and area and will inform estimates of bycatch mortality and bycatch risk which are designed to provide insights into the potential effects of fisheries on protected and sensitive species. Data on fishing effort, monitored/sampling effort, and bycatch of protected species will be aggregated as appropriate by ICES Division/Subdivision and ICES Ecoregion, by GSA areas in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and by statistical Division in the NAFO area. These data will be shown in maps and tables within ICES WGBYC reports and in ICES Advice (ICES, 2025). Aggregated data will be visible and accessible in the [ICES Publications Library](#).

3. Legal framework

All governments and intergovernmental commissions that request and receive advice from ICES are signatories to international agreements, including the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UN, 1995), whose Articles 5 and 6 call for consideration of the impacts of fisheries on marine ecosystems, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) outcomes (UN, 2002), where Article 30 promotes the implementation of an ecosystem approach to oceans policy, including fisheries.

For EU Member States, this data call is carried out in accordance with the relevant EU legislative framework including Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/967, Regulation (EU) 2019/1241, Council Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 (Common Fisheries Policy), Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 (Data Collection Framework), and Commission Delegated Decision (EU) 2021/1167.

Please note that the absence of DCF/EU MAP activity do not exempt countries from reporting.

This Data call follows the principles of personal data protection, as referred to in paragraph (9) of the preamble in Council Regulation (EC) No 2017/1004.

4. Data license

These data are made available to facilitate the scientific basis for advice in support of marine policies. All submitted data will be handled in line with the ICES Data Policy (<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8883>), ensuring appropriate attribution and use.

Data submitted to the bycatch data portal is identified as “restricted” and will be subject to the Commercial catch data license (<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.22188157>).

5. Deadlines

ICES request that the data for the year 2025 be uploaded to the ICES bycatch database by **3rd July 2026**, to provide enough time for additional quality assurance and data handling procedures before the upcoming WGBYC meeting in September 2026. **Data submitted after this date cannot be processed and will not be used at the WGBYC 2026 meeting.**

6. Data to report

6.1 Geographic and temporal scope

The temporal scope is for data collected specifically in **2025**. Please refer to the ICES bycatch data portal for guidance on the data submission process, format, data fields, and definitions; <https://www.ices.dk/data/data-portals/Pages/Bycatch.aspx>

The geographic scope of this data call covers the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent areas ([FAO Major Fishing Areas](#)) including:

- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO); Fishing Area 21
- ICES; Fishing Area 27, with the adjustments included in Table 6.1 to report for the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) Regulatory Area https://www.neafc.org/managing_fisheries/measures/ra_map)
- General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM); Fishing Area 37, including the Black Sea. <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/data/maps/gsas>

Please NOTE: Data from ICES divisions containing both National EEZ and NEAFC Regulatory Area waters should be reported with the appropriate ICES/NEAFC Subdivision code (e.g., 27.7.k.1 or 27.7.k.2 not just 27.7.k). See <https://vocab.ices.dk/?codeguid=74dc9c10-52a4-4f8c-b580-db01adbebccf>

6.2 Data types

Data covered by this data call are:

For ICES Member Countries (except the United States and Canada) with fisheries operating in ICES or NAFO area waters, and for EU Member States with fisheries operating in GFCM area waters:

- A) *all fishing effort (for all gear types even if no at-sea monitoring has occurred in the relevant period);*
- B) *all at-sea monitoring/sampling effort (for all gear types whether or not incidental bycatch has been recorded during the relevant time period). If the sampling program systematically targets and records all relevant protected species taxa (mammals, seabirds, turtles, fish) please select “Protected species” as Sampling Protocol.*

- C) *all recorded incidental bycatches of marine mammals (cetaceans, phocids), seabirds, and sea turtles. Annex 1 contains Ecoregion specific species lists of mammals, birds and turtles that can be used as guidance.*
- D) *incidental bycatches of fish species of bycatch relevance for ICES and GFCM area waters only. Annex 1 contains Ecoregion specific species lists of fish that can be used as guidance. Priority fish species, as identified in the “EU Action plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries” (EC, 2023), are included for GFCM waters. Note that submissions of data at a higher taxonomic level (e.g. genus, family) are also accepted.*

6.3. Changes from the previous data call

Note that the list of species of bycatch relevance was revised for the 2026 data call following updates of the ICES Roadmap for bycatch of ETP species (ICES, 2026).

In the case where a trip occurs in more than one Division/Subdivision, the currently accepted principles for calculation of days at sea are stipulated in a reference which is commonly known as the “Nicosia report” or the “2nd Workshop on Transversal Variables” (Castro Ribeiro et al., 2016). The principles are explained by case studies in Section 3, summarised in the Annex 5, and scripted in Annex 6. The resulting fecR package is maintained by the Intersessional subgroup “Metier and transversal variables” of the Regional Coordination Group (RCG) for North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic, and RCG Baltic and it is available here: <https://dcallnet.jrc.ec.europa.eu/gitlab/r-packages/fecR>

If the methodology differs from the one agreed in the “Nicosia report”, data submitters are requested to provide information on the approach used, including links to relevant documentation and scripts. The information should be provided under the comments field within the submission template (field 26 from the D2- bycatch monitoring effort sheet). Data submitters should include information on:

- Method to allocate fishing effort and monitoring effort when a trip covers several metiers,
- Method to allocate fishing effort and monitoring effort when a trip covers several ICES divisions or subdivisions,
- Method to allocate fishing effort and monitoring effort when a trip covers several quarters or months.

For pair trawlers, effort should be reported by fishing vessel. One fishing day for a pair trawler equals two vessel fishing days (one per vessel in the pair). Observer effort is reported for the vessel that carries the observer onboard.

7. Data submission

Data submissions must conform to the present structure of the data format definition (<https://datsu.ices.dk/web/selRep.aspx?Dataset=128>). To facilitate the submission of the data, ICES has developed an Excel template. The template can be downloaded from the bycatch database portal: <https://www.ices.dk/data/data-portals/Pages/Bycatch.aspx>

Once the Excel data submission template is completed, go to the “Export_data” sheet and press the “Export data to XML” button to create a data file in XML format, then save it onto your computer or network. **Please NOTE:** do not use the Excel automatic XML conversion function, as it will not produce the correct file.

Press the ‘Submit data’ link in the bycatch data portal and log in with your Microsoft Azure email. If you have not received an invitation for the new authentication method, please send a message to accessions@ices.dk with the topic “Request of Microsoft Azure authentication for Bycatch Data Call submission”.

If errors are found in your file, you can re-upload and overwrite previously entered data. After successful upload, you can check the records entered by clicking on “Summary of Submissions”.

8. Contact information

For support concerning any issues about the data call, including questions regarding the format, content, or submission procedure, please contact the ICES Secretariat at data.call@ices.dk or the WGBYC chairs Ailbhe Kavanagh (<mailto:ailbhe.kavanagh@marine.ie>), and Lotte Kindt-Larsen (lol@aquadtu.dk).

9. References

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