



Mr Joao Machado
DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs
European Commission
B1049, Brussels
Belgium

Dublin, 16 September 2019

RE: Request for setup ICES working group to investigate impacts of seismic activities on fish stocks in the North Western Waters

Dear Mr Machado,

The North Western Waters Advisory Council would like to request the cooperation of the Commission on the issue of the impacts of seismic surveys on fish stocks in the North Western Waters.

Over the past years, the NWWAC has paid careful attention to ongoing developments regarding the effects of seismic activities on fish stocks in the NWW. It is becoming increasingly clear that oil/gas exploration, wind farm construction and cabling are an important development in European offshore areas and the continuous growth of these sectors is to be expected. However, the impacts of these activities on fish behaviour, spawning grounds and larval development remain poorly understood by the scientific community.

NWWAC members are concerned over the quality, thoroughness and independence of impact studies carried out in advance of offshore projects. To date, most impact studies are being commissioned and/or funded by the energy sector, raising the question of impartiality. The NWWAC is of firm belief that independent scientific research regarding the impacts are necessary and urgent. We would therefore highly encourage the development of scientific expertise by ICES in this research field.

The members of the NWWAC would appreciate if the Commission could ask ICES to set up a working group that specifically investigates the effects of seismic surveys and cabling on fish biology, spawning grounds and larval development. While we recognise the value of the existing work carried out by the ICES working group on the effects of underwater noise on marine mammals, we believe the issue of impacts from seismic surveys on fish stocks to be separate and of sufficient importance for establishing a separate working group.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
Chairman Executive Committee



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