

## NAMMCO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, COUNCIL 31

# WORKING GROUP ON ENHANCING USER INVOLVEMENT IN NAMMCO DECISION MAKING (UIWG)

*15 January 2024, online, 12:00 CET*

The NAMMCO Working Group on enhancing User Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making (UIWG) held a second video conference on January 15, 2024. The Working Group (WG) was chaired by John-André Henden (IMR–Institute of Marine Research, Norway). The meeting agenda and list of participants are available in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

## 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Henden welcomed the participants and called for a round of introductions. He then gave the background of this WG and the main task for this meeting, namely, to discuss where and how in the NAMMCO decision making process this WG should be active.

The Terms of Reference of the UIWG are:

- a) To consider and give advice on how to best initiate, improve and strengthen users<sup>1</sup> involvement in NAMMCO to produce better decisions and strengthen the legitimacy of decisions. This will involve finding best practices on how to co-produce knowledge by stakeholders (users, scientists, managers) to obtain the best ecosystem-based management of marine mammals and their use by the societies that utilise them.*
- b) Give concrete recommendations on how to advance the work and how to monitor the progress.*

NAMMCO's Deputy Secretary Naima El bani Altuna was appointed as the primary rapporteur.

For everyone's reference, El bani Altuna described step by step the process to generate advice in NAMMCO and identified the stakeholders currently involved in each of these steps. Following that, Martin Biuw and Arne Bjørge, from IMR, who initiated the current process to enhance user involvement in NAMMCO at the NAMMCO Council 29 (2022), provided a background about their motivations behind this initiative. Biuw highlighted that the most important element for enhancing user involvement in the advice generating process is to have an open, transparent, and mutually respectful dialogue among all the stakeholders, emphasising the

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<sup>1</sup> Users include hunters and any other users of the resource such as local inhabitants, representatives from the fisheries and tourism Industries and others.

need to establish trust between the parties. NAMMCO's General Secretary, Geneviève Desportes, reminded everyone that the issue of low user involvement in the process of generating advice for decision-makers is not confined to a specific country or species and Masaana Dorph supported this idea.

Mikael Petersen, on behalf of KNAPK, gave an overview of the concerns of Greenlandic hunters and highlighted that KNAPK also supports the initiative to establish this WG to improve the information flow between scientists and hunters, as well as users' knowledge of the scientific methods, rationale, and results of research being conducted locally. Petersen informed the group about a project KNAPK is currently developing to establish a user knowledge bank in Greenland, where they are targeting hunters, elders, and youth.

Several members of the group emphasised the importance of integrating user knowledge throughout the entire process of generating advice, i.e., from conceptualising a framework of how a given population or ecosystem works to the formulation of management recommendations, rather than solely at the last step as is currently the case.

## **2. PROCESS FOR INCREASING USER INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

The group discussed the form, timing, and methodology for conducting the process to enhance user involvement. The group reached a consensus on the following points:

- The user involvement process should be species-specific, and if necessary, country specific.
- Users should be integrated into every step of the advice-generating process.

In the next meeting, the group will explore best practices to involve users in advice-generating processes based on real case studies.

## **3. RULES OF PROCEDURE**

The UIWG was proposed to be a standing working group with permanent membership, but open to adding new members when it is relevant. The WG suggested the following rules of procedure for the UIWG (Figure 1):

1. The NAMMCO Secretariat informs the UIWG about upcoming species assessments.
2. Before initiating a specific species assessment, the UIWG develops guidelines on effectively including users in such an assessment. Additionally, the UIWG issues a call to relevant countries, requesting the collation of users and/or user knowledge to be integrated into such an assessment.
3. Countries nominate relevant members for the subgroup related to such an assessment. The subgroup is responsible for roughly assessing and evaluating the quality of the collated user knowledge. This subgroup will present the collected user data and present the information to the species assessment WG.

- Both during and after the species assessment, the UIWG evaluates whether users' knowledge and the subgroup's work is adequately considered by the species assessment group during the information assessment and recommendation preparation. The UIWG then reports back to the Management Committee on this issue.

The UIWG's role is to supervise how NAMMCO effectively incorporates users and user knowledge in a structured manner, ensuring that species assessments encompass input from all relevant stakeholders.

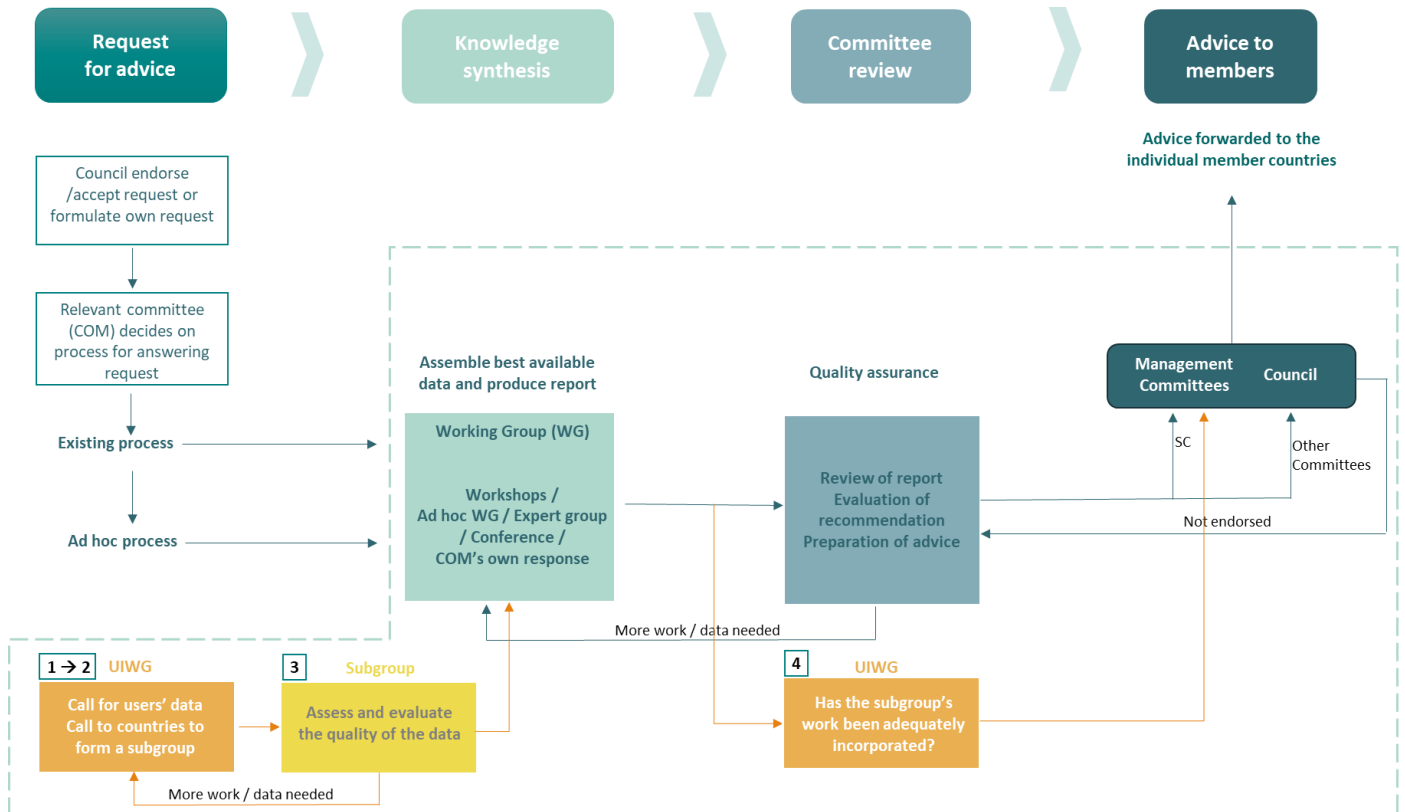


Figure 1. Proposed workflow for the suggested rules of procedure for the UIWG (in orange/yellow shades) as part of the process for generating recommendation to member countries within NAMMCO. The numbers indicate the steps in Item 3.

## 4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### Nomination of new members to the UIWG

To enhance user involvement also within the UIWG, Petersen suggested nominating the Chair of KNAPK, Nikkulaat Jeremiassen, to be part of this WG, not only because he is a hunter but also because of Jeremiassen's experience in management of species and political work.

The group discussed that the UIWG should be open to incorporating new members with diverse views and competencies as needed. Danielsen, Enghoff, and Biuw, who were invited to this meeting, but are not formally members of the UIWG, expressed their interest in joining future meetings of the UIWG and to continue

working to enhance user involvement in NAMMCO. The group agreed that it was beneficial for the WG to have “outside” experience and competence in stakeholder involvement processes.

#### Discussion about name change from “user” to “stakeholder”

During the first meeting of the UIWG in June 2023, the group discussed whether there was a need to change the name from "User Involvement Working Group" to "Stakeholder Involvement Working Group." However, in that meeting, the group did not develop a proposal to the Council to further consider this suggestion (NAMMCO/UIWG-2023-02/FI02).

Upon revisiting the proposal, Bjørge and Henden argued that the group's name should not be restrictive to different types of participants. They suggested that using a broad term like "stakeholder" puts everyone on the same level for initiating discussions. Enghoff, Desportes, and Petersen, on the other hand, emphasised the importance of focusing the name of the WG specifically on users. They pointed out that users are the ones not currently involved in the advice-generating process, and enhancing their involvement is the main goal of this WG. Dorph suggested that this discussion should be taken to the Council, as the process originated there.

In the lack of strong support to change the name of the group and strong arguments against changing the name of it, the group decided to not bring a proposal for the name changing forward.

#### Next meeting

The UIWG will hold another meeting in February or early March 2024, before the Council 31 meeting in mid-March 2024. During this meeting, the group will be presented with real case studies for user involvement to learn about best practices and discuss the possibility of developing a set of guidelines. The NAMMCO Secretariat will then present the group with upcoming species assessments in NAMMCO as suggested at the SC30, for the group to develop a tentative plan. The group will also discuss the question of whether external mediators should be included in the user involvement process.

This progress will be reported to the Management Committee in March 2024.

The final report was recirculated and accepted by the group on February 7, 2024.



## **APPENDIX 1: AGENDA**

- 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**
- 2. PROCESS FOR INCREASING USER INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**
- 3. RULES OF PROCEDURE**
- 4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

## APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT LIST

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