

DISCUSSION PAPER

EXPLORING FUNDING POSSIBILITIES FOR THE RACs IN RELATION TO STUDIES AND PROJECTS ON LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PLANS

Background

One of the main outcomes of the Joint RAC Seminar in LTM Plans held in Nantes¹ was that the RACs have an important role to play in assisting to the development and implementation of long-term management plans. However, reality shows that RACs in many occasions are advised to run behind a broad variety of short-term issues in response to consultation procedures launched by the Commission and/or the Member States. Indeed this is often done within stringent deadlines. This makes very difficult in practice for the RACs to provide a sound input and engage actively in building and design of strategies for long-term management planning and other related issues such as ecosystem-based management, marine spatial planning and Natura 2000 network, or control and compliance of the CFP rules, among others.

The major obstacle the RACs find to provide valuable input on long-term issues is the lack of necessary means and resources, together with time constraints. Despite these difficulties, the RACs have proven to be pro-active to date and have worked jointly in the past to organize specific technical Group meetings species-based (such as LTM Plan for Northern Hake in Atlantic waters or Anchovy in the Bay of Biscay, cod recovery strategy) and workshops on horizontal issues (e.g. Marine Protected Areas or Long-Term Management Plans) to bring closer all relevant stakeholders involved in this process: scientists, policy makers, economists, sociologists, representatives of the fishing industry, environmental NGOs and other interest groups ...

Setting the scene: suggested actions to be undertaken

In order to overcome this situation, the NWWRAC feels that additional funding would be needed to put forward actions aiming a more co-ordinated and enhanced cooperation and the exchange of good practices and successful experiences in key issues among stakeholders. Some suggested initiatives might include the following actions:

- Setting a network of partners and experts across the RACs (lead by one coordinator per RAC) entrusted with developing a work programme and producing some common general guidelines about stakeholders' input in LTM plans through regular meetings (two or three times a year);
- Seeking a more stable and regular framework of cooperation and provision of scientific advice from ICES / STCEF / CECAF / national scientific institutes and other independent organizations;

¹ Full report available in NWWRAC website:
http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/FINAL_REPORT_RAC_LTM%20Seminar_%20Nantes_Ian_Napier_en.pdf

- Organizing topic-based seminars and developing reports with the aim of compiling, processing and disseminating all relevant information and results obtained as a result of this process. This information should be easily available to all interested audiences and general public.

The NWWRAC is aware of the budgetary constraints of the Commission in relation to projects to develop the CFP, and has started to move forward to identify some options among the available existing funding alternatives which might be relevant to some of their activities within this topic.

Options of funding:

1. Calls for tender from European Commission²

The NWWRAC regards as very positive the periodic calls launched by the Commission on a yearly basis to sponsor projects related to fisheries management under its Working Programmes. Some of the studies for carrying out the Common Fisheries Policy (such as improvement of data collection; definition of fisheries for some specific areas; or review of gear marking practices) have been already very relevant to the NWWRAC, which has been involved and participated in a further or lesser extent in some of these projects

2. INTERREG programmes

The Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation Strategy³ for 2007-2013 is expected to launch a certain number of calls for proposals along this period. The RACs might benefit as a relevant organization where an important number of countries are represented via their representatives.

In particular, the NWWRAC feels that it might be part of the projects included under Priority no. 2 targeted to “protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment sustainability” that would fall under their scope of activities: for example, Objectives 2.2 – Sustainable management and protection of the resources of marine spaces; and 2.4. - Protect and promote natural spaces, water resources and coastal zones.

3. Seventh Framework Programme on Research, Development and Innovation (FP7)⁴

The European Commission has recently published a number of calls for proposal under the global programmes “Cooperation” and “Capacities” for the period 2007-2013.

² More information in DGMARE website: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/tenders_proposals_en.htm

³ Website: <http://atlanticarea.inescporto.pt/>

⁴ See CORDIS website: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

In particular, the Working Programme already presented for 2009 includes two themes that would be potentially relevant for “Cooperation”:

- Theme 2. “Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Biotechnology”
 - Activity 2.1: Sustainable production and management of biological resources from land, forest and aquatic environment
 - Area 2.1.2 Increased sustainability of all production systems
- Theme 6. “Environment (including Climate Change)”
 - 6.2. Sustainable management of resources (e.g. projects on Marine resources and options for ecosystem approach to marine integrated environmental management)
 - 6.4. Earth observation and assessment tools for sustainable development.

4. Any other projects which might be relevant to the RAC under the EFF

There might be another number of initiatives that the NWWRAC would be keen to discuss with the Commission to articulate the extent of their participation in other projects.

Conclusions: Questions to be addressed to the Commission

The NWWRAC would like to know precisely what the Commission’s view on funding possibilities is. In this particular, the following questions are presented in order to plan a more efficient allocation of time and resources and to set a clear definition of work priorities within the RACs:

- Would it be possible for the RACs to make their own initiative research proposals to the Commission?

The NWWRAC feels that it would be a good idea that the Commission establishes regular contact and open consultation among the RACs to identify and suggest those topics or initiatives of interest for them before submitting the final proposal (or mid-term review) of its Working Programme.

- Would the RACs be entitled to apply directly for funding and act as coordinators or “leaders” for these projects, or contrarily would they always join to an existing initiative?
- If the later, would the RACs be able to join to these initiatives on a previous stage (e.g. with one of the tenderors or candidates) or should they wait until the project is awarded to a specific consortium?
- Is there any ceiling or upper limit to the money the RACs can receive from other sources than the Specific Agreement of an Operation Grant (e.g. other Community funds, Member States’ contributions, etc.)?
- Would these additional incomes influence in the final amount received by the Commission as operational grant (e.g. decreasing if extra incomes received for such activities or actions)?



Open call for debate

The NWWRAC members are invited to consider all the comments and questions above mentioned and agree a proposed way forward in relation to this issue.