



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS

Resources and relations with stakeholders

**Interinstitutional relations and dialogue with the sector; Information and communication**

Brussels, 30 March 2006

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### **RACs COORDINATION MEETING**

**Brussels, 22 March 2006**

### **DEBRIEFING**

The Commission convened the second coordination meeting with the RACs on 22 March 2006 in Brussels with the participation of representatives from the existing RACs: North Sea, Pelagic, North Western Waters and Baltic Sea. Representatives from the Member States, the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) as well as from the RACs that are still in the preparatory phase were also invited as observers (see list of participants attached).

#### **1. WELCOME**

Mr Holmquist, Director General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, welcomed the participants. The Commission would continue to organise regularly Coordination meetings as long as there was an interest from the stakeholders. It was important to involve ACFA as an observer in these discussions as it was still advising the Commission from a European perspective. However, there was no clear division of areas of responsibilities between ACFA and RACs, an issue that should be addressed. The Commission highlighted that it was very satisfied about the fruitful work with the existing RACs.

#### **2. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME AND PRIORITIES FOR 2006**

The Commission's priorities for the coming months on which it would consult RACs (and ACFA) were the following:

- Review of the **Data Collection** Regulation: RACs would have the opportunity to comment on a draft Regulation that would be ready in April, to be put forward to the Council in June or July.
- Communication from the Commission on implementing sustainability in EU fisheries (**MSY**): Existing RACs had already been consulted and the Commission would seek further input after adoption of a Communication in April/May.
- Review of **Technical Measures** Regulation: RACs had already been consulted on a non-paper. The Commission's proposal would be ready in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2006.

- Communication on the **parameters for measuring fishing effort**: A document would be circulated to RACs already in May. Draft for comment before the summer break.
- Communication on **fishing licences and permits**, to be finalised before the end of 2006.
- Progress report on **discards**: RACs input would be requested in June-early July.
- Long term management plan for **West Scotland Herring**, which concerned the NWW RAC, that would be ready by June/July.
- Review of the **cod recovery plan** (NWW RAC and NSRAC): The aim of the review exercise was to take stock of what had been done so far. The Commission hoped to have an extensive discussion on a Commission's working paper that would be ready in May. However, it was unlikely that there would be any proposals for amendment before the end of 2006. ICES would certainly play a role but the stakeholders should also provide ideas on how to conduct the technical evaluation.
- **Impact assessment evaluations**: The Commission would measure the environmental, social and economical effects of its proposals according to a standardised framework in the context of better governance. ACFA and RACs would be associated to this exercise.

The Chair of ACFA believed that most of the above topics were of a horizontal nature and, therefore, should be dealt with also by ACFA. The Commission explained that it would indicate where the main focus of the discussions would take place when launching a consultation but that this should not exclude contributions from other parties that could be also interested. In any case, certain horizontal issues did also have a regional dimension.

### 3. RACs INPUT INTO THE TACs AND QUOTAS

The Commission explained the proposed changes to the timing of the Commission's annual management decisions on management opportunities to allow for a meaningful consultation with stakeholders about management options. The consultation process, which would begin much earlier than in the past and thus increase transparency and reduce uncertainty, involved 3 stages:

1. Dialogue with the RACs, Council and Parliament on the basis of a **Policy Statement**, to be published in May (April in the future). This paper would provide with the Commission's views and strategy for setting TACs and quotas for the following year, in light of the current scientific advice.
2. Earlier proposal for those stocks where the scientific advice was available in June (**Baltic, deep sea and a number of pelagic stocks**) in order to finalise Council decisions in September/October.
3. Consultations on the **October stocks** as in the previous years, although the debate on the Commission's intentions would already have taken place on the basis of the policy statement.

ICES was also working on the possibility of bringing forward the scientific advice for more stocks from October to June although this would not happen before 2007. The Pelagic RAC requested to have the advice on all pelagic stocks in June. The Commission was also considering producing a self-standing regulation on the rules for fishing effort which would be separate from the TACs and quotas regulation. However, this splitting could not take place in 2006 as it was closely related to the debate on the cod recovery plan and how to manage fishing effort under the recovery plans. Finally, the Commission would develop a new procedure regarding the derogations from Annex II, that would be separated out from the annual discussion; decisions would be taken following the submission of a dossier to STECF and then the Commission would submit a proposal for amendment if it was a good case. The Commission explained that the new MoU with ICES would also revise the way that ICES advice was presented.

The Commission explained that it would prefer to consult RACs individually rather than all together.

#### **4. STATE OF PLAY ON THE UNDERGOING CONSULTATIONS AND FOLLOW UP OF THE ADVICE**

The Commission explained that the mechanism for consulting RACs and replying to their advice seemed to work well. The consultations that were still in the pipeline were: simplification (although some RACs were unwilling to react), MSY and technical measures (both issues already dealt with under point 2).

#### **5. DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SCIENTISTS AND RACS**

The Commission indicated its intention to fully support RACs interaction with scientists, insisting on the fact that this was a two-way process that included:

1. Participation of scientists in RACs meetings to present the advice and contribute to the discussions. The Commission would continue to cover the travel expenses of the scientists in the framework of the new MoU. A similar approach would be applied to STECF scientists. The Commission insisted that it was important that the **RACs indicated clearly their needs regarding scientific participation in their meetings.**
2. **RACs requests for advice:** As ICES was an independent body, RACs could make arrangements with it at will. The Commission, however, was offering to solve the financial implications this would have by taking account of RACs requests in its own requests for advice..
3. **Research funding:** RACs proposals for research could be integrated in the Commission's call for proposals but on a competitive basis.

The RACs had met during the morning in the framework of an informal Inter-RAC and agreed to have an informal MoU with EFARO to ensure that national laboratories would provide scientific expertise to RACs, if requested.

## **6. RACs VISIT TO NON-EU COUNTRIES**

DG FISH was organising a visit to **Eastern coast Canada and the USA** with representatives of the RACs (plus an NGO and a scientist) to look at how stakeholders were involved in fisheries management outside the EU. This trip would take place in early June and it would be followed up by a report that would be circulated to all RACs.

## **7. SET UP OF THE CONTROL AGENCY'S ADVISORY BOARD WITH RACs' PARTICIPATION**

The Advisory Board of the Control Agency would be composed of one representative per RAC (plus an alternate) and chaired by the Executive Director. The Commission expected that, once the Executive Director was appointed in June, RACs would be requested to nominate their representatives and to take part at the first meeting. A member of the Advisory board would seat within the Administrative board without a right to vote. The Commission had no role to play on the setting up of the Advisory board as the Control Agency was an independent body.

## **8. UPDATE OF THE GRANT AGREEMENTS**

The Commission provided an overview on the state of play of the different grant agreements concluded by the Commission with each of the RACs. The Commission stressed the importance of producing an **intermediate progress report** within 6 months of the date of signature of the grant to ensure proper implementation of the grants.

RACs were highly concerned about the fact that they could not save money from one year to the other when the Community grant would decrease. The Commission clarified that the rationale behind the grants was to cover a gap in the financing of a body, i.e. that they should only cover the part of the budget not covered by the other sources of financing. Any surplus would then be considered as a benefit. The Commission could understand RACs' concerns but had to follow the Community financial rules, which had been agreed by Council and Parliament. Although it would be difficult, the Commission would make its utmost to find a reasonable solution. It was agreed that RACs would meet with the Commission's services dealing with financial issues to explain the financial rules and how to implement them. The Commission will soon send to RACs an explanatory paper on its expectations concerning the audit report that has to be presented to the Commission.

The Spanish administration referred to the case of a particular RAC (the NWW), where a Member State (the UK) had proposed to second a person to help the Secretariat. Spain believed that any need to increase the RACs' budgets had to be decided by a consensus of all Member States concerned. The NSRAC pointed out that they had also identified the need of having a RAC facilitator and they had asked Member States whether they were willing to contribute with a secondment. Finally, the Pelagic RAC explained that they had received a proposal from the Scottish Executive to contribute financially (an amount equal to the contribution from the Member States concerned), but that, due to the hesitations of some members, the offer had been withdrawn.

The Commission acknowledged that RACs independence should not be compromised but that any extra financial contribution from the Member States should be in principle

welcome. The Commission was ready to set up a meeting with the national administrations to further discuss about the particular case of the NWW RAC.

**9. A.O.B.**

The Commission's services could serve as a focal point to coordinate RACs planning of meetings. An updated version of RACs calendar was included regularly in DG FISH website.

Miriam García Ferrer

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE COORDINATION MEETING WITH RACs  
Brussels, 22 MARCH 2006**

| <b>Organisation</b>             | <b>Name</b>                             |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>North Sea RAC</b>            |   |
|                                 | Mr Hugo ANDERSSON – Chair               |
|                                 | Ms Ann BELL - Secretariat               |
|                                 | Ms Christine ABSIL – Vice Chair         |
|                                 | Mr Gerard VAN BALSFOORT – Vice Chair    |
| <b>Pelagic RAC</b>              |   |
|                                 | Mr Sean O'DONOGHUE – Chair WG           |
|                                 | Mr Christian OLESEN – Chair WG          |
|                                 | Ms Ingvild HARKES – Secretariat         |
| <b>North Western Waters RAC</b> |   |
|                                 | Mr Sam LAMBOURN – Chair                 |
|                                 | Ms Patricia COMISKEY – Secretariat      |
|                                 | Ms Dolores HANRATTY – Secretariat       |
| <b>Baltic Sea RAC</b>           |   |
|                                 | Mr Tobias KERRN-JESPERSEN – Secretariat |
| <b>Pre-RACs</b>                 |   |
| Long Distance Pre-RAC           | Mr Manuel LIRIA FRANCH                  |
| Mediterranean Pre-RAC           | Ms Francisca MARTINEZ                   |
|                                 | Mr Mourad KAHOUL                        |
| <b>Member States</b>            |   |
| Denmark                         | Mr Jesper Wulff PEDERSEN                |
| Germany                         | Mr Wolfgang LÖHE                        |
| Spain                           | Mr Pedro GALACHE<br>Mr Borja VELASCO    |
| France                          | Mr Francis FOULON                       |
| Ireland                         | Mr Colm HAYES                           |
| Poland                          | Mr RUCINSKI                             |
| Netherlands                     | Mr Joost PAARDEKOPER                    |
| United Kingdom                  | Mr Ben CATTERMOLE                       |
|                                 | Ms Anna ZARADNA                         |
|                                 | Ms Josefina BRANA                       |
|                                 | Ms Olof WILLIAMSON                      |
| <b>ACFA</b>                     |   |
| Chair                           | Mr Michel DION                          |

|                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Europêche/Cogeca | Mr Guy VERNAEVE            |
| NGOs             | Mr Staffan DANIELSSON      |
| ETF              | Ms Livia SPERA             |
| <b>DG FISH</b>   |                            |
|                  | Mr HOLMQUIST               |
|                  | Mr MASTRACCHIO             |
|                  | Mr FARNELL                 |
|                  | Mr Poul DEGNBOL            |
|                  | Mr Olle HAGSTRÖM           |
|                  | Mr CUEFF                   |
|                  | Ms Monique PARIAT          |
|                  | Mr SPAGNOLLI               |
|                  | Ms GARIAZZO                |
|                  | Mr GALLIZIOLI              |
|                  | Mr Peter HOPKINS           |
|                  | Ms Maria Jesús RUIZ MONROY |
|                  | Miriam GARCÍA FERRER       |
|                  | Ms SOKOLI                  |