



INTER-ACs SECRETARIATS MEETING

11 October 2022, 10:30 – 12:30 CET

FINAL MINUTES

The Chair Valerie Tankink welcomed all participants to the meeting and introduced colleagues from DG MARE. She felt that it was important to keep these meetings a regular occasion to discuss the organisation of the work of the ACs between Secretariats and DG MARE. This is different from Inter-AC meetings, which are more focused on policy development. The next Inter-AC is planned for 17 November. Interpretation is still to be confirmed for this meeting. ACs can expect an update by next week. Tankink then introduced the agenda and gave the floor to her colleague Vincent Guerre for an update on key files relevant to ACs in the work ahead.

1. Planning of the work for 2023

Guerre mentioned the intense consultation of stakeholders as a valuable input on the CFP report. He explained that DG MARE is preparing the report in the form of a communication to be accompanied by a staff working document. This is an important deliverable, a legal requirement and important step to analyse the implementation of the policy. It will focus especially on policy tools and governance, looking at successes and shortcomings, without triggering a legislative reform. The adoption date is not clear yet, but the communication might be published by end of the year. He stressed that the communication will be an opportunity to further engage with stakeholders. ACs will be key actors in this process. This deliverable is strictly linked to the Action plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems, to be published soon.

Pedro Reis Santos asked about the status of the report on the functioning of the CMO. Tankink replied that it is in preparation and that it goes in parallel with the CFP report. However, while the CFP report will take the form of communication, with a stronger focus on next steps, the CMO report will be done in a state of play reporting approach, with a less forward-looking angle to it.

Mo Mathies pointed out that ACs took a lot of effort in contributing to the CFP consultation. However, in the case of the North Western Water (NWW), there was little discussion at regional level with the Member States Group (MSG). She asked whether the Commission would ask the MSG to work more closely with all stakeholders after the report is published. Tankink explained that DG MARE had indeed hoped for more discussions taken up by the MSG. This is being considered in the report on regionalisation. *“Real dialogue between stakeholders and Member States is needed and we are looking at how to improve those interactions”*, she said.

Reis Santos pointed out that members of the Market Advisory Council (MAC) would be interested in organising an event on CMO functioning with DG MARE. Tankink replied that it is possible at any moment, and it does not need to be necessarily linked with the report. She took the opportunity to ask Secretariats to what extent they see added value in the organisation of events on topics of common interest involving MS and multiple ACs and how DG MARE can contribute.

Mathies agreed that there are many horizontal topics, such as climate change and Maritime Spatial Planning, on which wider events would be appreciated. She added that the NWWAC has several joint Focus Groups with other ACs like the NSAC and the PelAC and is always ready to consider where any joint work is possible. This can be difficult from the organisational point of view, especially since every AC has different approval procedures. Reis Santos agreed with Mathies and added that the MAC would be interested in addressing topics such as IUU, the revision of the Control Regulation, taxonomy and the technical screening criteria.

Regarding control, Tankink replied that discussions are still ongoing with co-legislators. However, that would not be addressed in a regionalised approach. DG MARE control colleagues agree that this topic should be addressed horizontally, maybe in an Inter-ACs meeting.

Benoit Guerin expressed the importance of sharing best practices among ACs in terms of organisation and functioning. He then asked whether the CFP report will mention anything specific regarding the long-distance fleets and fisheries. Tankink confirmed that the report will be looking at the international dimension of the CFP.

Daniela Costa agreed that meetings on issues of common interests would be helpful, especially on control. She then highlighted the importance of having interpretation at these meetings and to consider the different time zones characterising Outermost Regions' stakeholders.

Mathies highlighted that horizontal issues should not be addressed in Inter-ACs only, as these are open to a small number of representatives per AC. It is vital for AC members to feel the contact with the Commission and have direct access to ask questions, otherwise they lose connection and interest. Tankink confirmed that DG MARE colleagues will continue to do their best to attend ACs meetings and get involved.

Benoit Guerin agreed with Mo Mathies, highlighting the importance of debate and exchange of views among all the members. It would be important to find a working arrangement so that the attendance to Inter-AC meetings isn't restricted. Human resource concern within DG MARE is perfectly understandable, however ACs have been created to facilitate exchange with the European Commission and other institutions.

Since an Inter-ACs physical meeting is planned in March 2023, Tankink proposed to organise another Inter-Secretariats meeting in a physical format back-to-back with the Inter-ACs. NWWAC indicated that they had scheduled meetings in Madrid between 13 and 15 March, CC RUP in Lisbon between 21 and 30 March and BLSAC on 28 and 29 March. To understand ACs availability, Mathies suggested that MARE D3 sends a calendar sheet for ACs to fill with dates of meetings that have already been scheduled for March 2023. Reis Santos pointed out that ACs usually take the opportunity to meet between Chairs and Secretariats in advance of Inter-ACs meetings, but another meeting like this could also be organised. Pascale Colson added that including a specific meeting with Chairs and Vice-Chairs could also be envisaged. Tankink agreed that this could be beneficial to share practices among Chairs.

Marzia Piron asked whether there are any criteria set by DG MARE establishing when a hybrid meeting setting should be preferred to in-person organisation. Tankink replied that there is no one size fits all solution. Each AC needs to find the best way to manage this, taking into account constraints in terms of budget and travel emissions.

Guillaume Carruel added that the Chair of the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC) expressed willingness to engage in meetings with the Commission and is particularly interested in discussing meeting organisation and Commission participation. He agreed that it would be useful to share best practices among Chairs.

2. Questions and answers put forward by the ACs

Tankink proposed to have a tour de table based on questions sent by the ACs in advance of the meeting. She proposed to start with financial matters and gave the floor to her colleague Dobrinka Dimova. Dimova thanked the Secretariats for their good collaboration which allowed to advance with the lump sum approach implementation.

Mathies asked which documents need to be submitted at the end of the financial year and in particular if a financial report is needed under the lump sum approach. Dimova explained that a final technical report including all the activities implemented by the AC will be needed for the Commission to compare with the planning submitted in the financial application. Here is where the AC will indicate whether the work programme has been fully or partially completed. No cost claim with listing of cost items incurred and financial implementation will be needed. Pascale Colson added that a new template for the technical report is available in Annex 4 of the MGA (with the amount requested) and Annex 5 (related to the final technical report).

Carruel asked what underperformance on the work programme will mean in terms of financing. Dimova assured participants that the Commission takes into account the possibility of discrepancies between the work planned and the outputs achieved. If less than 50% of the work planned was accomplished, then DG MARE would question the AC operational implementation compared to the AC's planned activities for that financial year. If an AC identifies that it might be in the situation where the operational implementation is at 50% or below compared to the planning, it is important that there is immediate communication with the Commission. In the worst-case scenario there might be a 50% reduction of the lump sum, but this is highly improbable and DG MARE's intention is to ensure that the lump sum awarded always matches an AC's needs.

Marina Illuminati explained that the Mediterranean Advisory Council (MedAC) is going to sign a new contract for 2023, but their financial year is ending at the end of this year. She asked for confirmation that a new framework partnership agreement (FPA) will have to be signed and then a new SA will be agreed. Dimova replied that indeed a new FPA will be needed. The MedAC will be consulted before signature.

Mathies pointed out that concerns arose regarding request to ACs to fund interpretation and translations in certain cases. When ad hoc requests like these come in, it is not always possible to see if there is money available. Spending money on events that are not planned in the work programme need approval by the Executive Committee. Chloé Pocheau agreed with Mathies, adding that these ad hoc requests from the Commission should be notified much in advance as interpretation needs time to organise. Dimova replied that normally the financial estimate established for each financial year (that constitutes the basis for the award of the lump sum) should include planning of recurrent and necessary meetings, including interpretation needs. *"We understand your situation when you receive ad hoc requests from the Commission that you cannot plan, but there is no possibility to adjust the lump sum in the middle of the year. You need to assess if you have the financial availability to cover the costs you need"*, she explained. The Commission and the ACs need to find a good way to coordinate such requests. If these come on a recurrent basis and are considered by the Commission as necessary, then the Commission will have to see how to support interpretation services. Tankink added that proper planning in advance is essential, as well as more reflection and awareness raising on both sides.

Mathies enquired about the 2% annual increase mentioned in DG MARE original request for a new framework partnership agreement under the lump sum approach. Dimova confirmed that an indexation is indeed foreseen. She needed to confirm with MARE E1 colleagues how this will be calculated.

Costa pointed out the issue of having many reports and studies published by the Commission in English only. This creates a barrier for many stakeholders, and ACs have to use their own financial resources for translations. Tankink explained that it would not be possible to translate everything, especially when it comes to studies prepared by external experts. Discussions are still ongoing regarding the translation of CFP report, as the staff working document in particular is a very extensive document.

Reis Santos raised the issue of Commission attendance at ACs meeting, expressing the need for clarification on the invitation procedure. In particular, it is important to identify the officers/Units responsible for each AC. He also added that in the past DG MARE encouraged ACs to send written questions after a meeting, in case Commission attendance was not possible. The MAC submitted a set of questions, which have not received a reply. Tankink and Colson replied that MARE AC is the entry point for organisation of meetings. DG MARE continues to improve internal arrangements

and awareness raising on ACs work. Regarding ad hoc questions and requests, they assured DG MARE colleagues are doing their best to reply in a timely fashion and encouraged ACs to send reminders to colleagues if needed.

Regarding notification of Commission participation at AC meetings, Mathies pointed out that ACs send detailed meetings planning with the grant application, with especially precise indications on plenary meetings. These are usually those meetings where ACs need Commission attendance the most. Even if agendas are not defined yet, usually the same DG MARE representatives are needed. It can be extremely stressful for Secretariats to ensure Commission attendance last minute. She asked if it would be possible to contact and invite those DG MARE representatives directly. Tankink explained that DG MARE is already working on including ACs meetings calendars on SharePoint for Commission colleagues as well as raising awareness on the role of the ACs and the importance of stakeholder involvement. She then added that ultimately Head of Units will decide who goes to which meetings. There is no objection to include desk officers in copy to emails to MARE AC, but they should not be approached individually. A Head of Unit can be addressed directly with desk officers and MARE AC in copy.

Mathies asked if a DG MARE organigramme is available, providing information on what files and topics a Unit is dealing with. Tankink replied that this will be checked, and that DG MARE will work to increase clarity and transparency.

Mathies also raised the point regarding Commission support in promoting ACs. Many ACs lost members following Brexit and many NGOs left too. The NWWAC made a direct effort through a membership drive exercise to increase membership, including contacting previous OIG members to re-join. Unfortunately, this was not successful, and it was very disappointing to hear NGOs saying they have no resources or capacity to engage in the AC again. She encouraged DG MARE to promote all ACs and encourage individual organisations to join, including fishing sector organisations. She proposed that this topic is also added to the Inter-AC agenda for further discussions. Tankink assured participants that DG MARE is aware of this issue and discussions are happening also in relation to the CFP report. DG MARE is always trying to remind the importance of the ACs and of having all stakeholders present in them. It is indeed a very complicated situation and further reflections are needed to figure out concrete actions.

Costa asked DG MARE to share their holiday calendar to ensure meetings are not planned on those dates.

Cécile Fouquet supported Mathies' point regarding stakeholder engagement. Specifically referring to aquaculture, no environmental NGOs have enough funding to work with the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) and their perspective would be extremely important to include in recommendations. She encouraged DG MARE to promote the AAC as a place to help voicing environmental NGOs' concerns on aquaculture. It is equally important to consider how MS take AC advice into consideration. There is room for improvement and support of from the Commission is key. Tankink replied that DG MARE does its best to underline the importance of continued dialogue with ACs when working with MS.

3. AOB and closing remarks

Before closing the meeting, Tankink encouraged Secretariats to get in touch with DG MARE and especially with Guerre, who is the main point of contact on what can be done to increase visibility of ACs and improve their involvement.

The PelAC Secretariat expressed their availability to organise the next online Secretariats meeting.

4. Participants list

Name	Organisation
Anne Coudeyre	DG MARE
Aurélie Drillet	SWWAC
Benoit Guerin	LDAC
Cécile Fouquet	AAC

Chloé Pocheau	SWWAC
Daniela Costa	CCRUP
Dobrinka Dimova	DG MARE
Elena Peneva	BISAC
Ewa Milewska	BSAC
Fabiana Nogueira	CCRUP
Guillaume Carruel	BSAC
Julie Alexandrova	PeIAC
Manuela Iglesias	LDAC
Marina Illuminati	MEDAC
Marzia Piron	MEDAC
Matilde Vallerani	NWWAC
Mo Mathies	NWWAC
Pascale Colson	DG MARE
Pedro Reis Santos	MAC
Sophie Kuijten	DG MARE
Soumaya Bouker	DG MARE
Valérie Tankink	DG MARE
Vincent Guerre	DG MARE