
Location: West-Indisch Huis, Amsterdam, NL (Herenmarkt 99, Tel: +31 20 625 7528)

Date: 10 July 2012

Start time: 16:00

End time: 18:00

More info: see www.pelagic-rac.org

Participants

Iain MacSween (chair), Christine Absil, Jose Beltran, Fuensanta Candela, Antoine Dhellemmes, Lesley Duthie, Ramon de la Figuera, Miren Garmendia, Ian Gatt, Almudena Gomez, Stewart Harper, Brian Isbister, Nils Christian Jensen, Reine J. Johansson, Anne-Marie Kats, Fredrik Lindberg, Audun Maråk, Alan McCulla, Fernando Nieto, Francis O'Donnell, Sean O'Donoghue, Verena Ohms, Christian Olesen, Eibhlin O'Sullivan, Jesper Raakjaer, Eric Roeleveld, Gerard van Balsfoort, Ludmilla van der Meer, John Ward

(1) Opening of ExCom meeting by the chairman, Iain MacSween

The meeting was opened by the chairman Iain MacSween who welcomed the participants and explained the functioning of the translation equipment. He then introduced the new Executive Secretary, Verena Ohms, and provided some background information on the selection procedure that lead to her employment. Afterwards he asked all participants to briefly introduce themselves.

(2) Approval of the agenda

The agenda was approved without amendments.

(3) Approval of the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 8 February 2012

The minutes were approved without amendments.

One matter arising from the minutes regarded drafting a policy paper on MSY which has not yet taken place. Aukje Coers, the former Executive Secretary, is still interested in participating in the drafting process, but is currently too busy to spend any time on this. Therefore it has been decided to carry this issue forward to a future meeting.

Another matter arising from the minutes concerned the dialogue with the European Commission regarding the establishment of a reserve before a deficit materializes. Gerard van Balsfoort explained that the Commission made very clear in a recent letter that this practice will no longer be accepted. However, to resolve all outstanding issues in relation to the 2010-2011 grant the Commission has decided to accept this practice for the year 2010-2011 and the final payment for this year has recently been made to the Pelagic RAC.

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(4) New PRAC representative in the GAP 2 steering group

Verena Ohms informed the Executive Committee about the GAP 2 project which is an EU funded research project that strives to strengthen the collaboration between scientists, stakeholders and policy makers regarding fishery management. The PRAC has a seat in the steering group of GAP 2 and the Executive Committee had to decide on a new PRAC representative in this steering group, a task previously fulfilled by Aukje Coers. It was decided unanimously that Verena Ohms should be the new PRAC representative.

(5) Amendments regarding regionalisation, functioning and funding of the RACs (Sean O'Donoghue)

The chairman noted that he was puzzled by the document prepared by Sean O'Donoghue since he was not sure if the text was based on the latest proposal by the European Commission.

Sean O'Donoghue explained that he drafted this document following the Working Group II meeting on 8 February 2012 during which there was a lively discussion on the CFP reform and where it was decided that the PRAC would focus its comments on the three issues of regionalization, functioning and funding of the RACs. He furthermore asserted that there is only one Commission proposal dating 13 July 2011 and that everything else are working documents from the Council. He also noted that the Fisheries Committee will vote on the proposal in October and that Council, Parliament and Commission would discuss it towards the end of the year. Although there are currently 2300 amendments relating to the Commission's original proposal, the original proposal still forms the basis to refer to at the moment. He then mentioned that while the Council has already adopted a position, it is still possible to get our point across in the Parliament.

In the following Sean O'Donoghue explicated the amendments one by one, starting with amendments 3 to 6 that deal with functioning and funding for which all 7 RACs are trying to develop a joint position. In summary his changes aim to strengthening the position of the RACs by providing more funding and making it possible to apply for EU grants under the EMFF to cover "*both administrative technical and scientific costs associated with carrying out studies to underpin their recommendations.*" Furthermore in annex 3 of the Commission's proposal all the stocks the Pelagic RAC is dealing with are listed. However, this list does not yet include boar fish and therefore we legally do not have a remit that covers this species. This species will have to be included in the future, maybe together with other stocks which are not in our remit yet.

Sean O'Donoghue then referred to the first two amendments he has written which cope with regionalization. In his amendments he introduced the term "*decentralized entities*" which could be set up by the member states to adopt conservation measures in accordance with multi-annual plans and define the objectives, targets and timelines for each fishery.

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After these explanations he asked the Executive Committee for agreement to his amendments about funding, functioning and decentralized entities. Otherwise he suggested leaving things as they are at the moment.

Christine Absil was wondering what the status of these amendments was and where the PRAC would want to submit them to. She suggested submitting such a document jointly with other RACs. The chairman agreed since these issues are of concern to all RACs.

According to Sean O'Donoghue the secretariat of the NWWWRAC should soon circulate a document raising the idea to submit a joint RAC position regarding functioning, funding and regionalization of the RACs within the new CFP. The idea is to thereby provide ideas and feedback to the Parliament.

Christian Olesen agrees to include boarfish in the amendments although he finds it weird to discuss something that already has been agreed upon. He also agrees on including funding for technical and scientific reports. However, he does not understand why funding should come from EMFF instead of from a grant for a bodies pursuing an aim of general European interest. Furthermore he does not see an advantage in having decentralized entities and he does not want multi-annual plans for pelagic species. Therefore there is no agreement on this point yet.

Gerard van Balsfoort expressed the opinion that the PRAC indeed miss the opportunity to influence the council which is not convinced to reform the involvement of stakeholders. He also thinks that it is still possible to influence the Parliament and that given the vast amount of confusion regarding any issue of the CFP reform joint and clear-cut ideas of all RACs would indeed strengthen the RACs position and could affect the Parliament's decisions. He furthermore emphasized that although Sean O'Donoghue suggested having a decentralized entity between commission and member states most members of the PRAC are hesitant to have such an entity as also explained in the PRAC's position paper three years ago. He still thinks that the PRAC is in a special situation as it has to deal with coastal states. While the PRAC does want LTMPs these have to be adaptable if it turns out that they are not working so to not be stuck with the plans. As it is generally difficult to change plans quickly it might not be useful to have an additional regulatory entity especially when dealing with 3rd countries. Therefore he stressed that the PRAC has to make clear to the Parliament that it might not be useful to have a decentralized entity when dealing with pelagic species. While many member states want the PRAC to be more productive Gerard van Balsfoort explained that this is difficult under the current financing. He pointed out that funding has to increase and be more flexible if the PRAC is to improve its performance. He does not think that this will be possible if the funding comes from a grant under the framework of general European interest. If EMFF will turn out to be the way to go he will agree, but he would like to know why Sean O'Donoghue thinks that EMFF would provide a better solution. Personally Gerard van Balsfoort thinks that EMFF could help as a second funding source, but that not all of the funding should come from EMFF. In the future he would like the list of species in the remit of the PRAC to be defined to small pelagic species.

Reine Johansson agreed that all RACs must have a common position to be communicated to the Parliament. However he said that he cannot live with Sean

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O'Donoghue's suggestion when it comes to funding as he considers the RACs to be bodies of general European interest.

Almudena Gomez shared the opinion that the PRAC has to specify the species it will want to cope with in the future and followed Gerard van Balsfoort's suggestion to define them to small pelagic species. She also emphasized that it is necessary to exactly define what is meant by the term "*decentralized entities*".

Sean O'Donoghue stressed the importance of adopting a common position within all RACs regarding functioning and funding. He is convinced that if future funding will be provided through a grant for bodies of general European interest the PRAC will be constrained to the amount of funding it currently receives and hence will not be able to gain momentum and be more effective. Therefore he would like to see a new funding line under the heading of EMFF. He also argued that adding only boarfish to the remits of the PRAC is too limited and there is a need to include other species too. At the same time, however, it is important to not take away species from other RACs. Regarding regionalization he defended his suggestion that member states should be authorized to set up decentralized entities, which would only deal with two issues, namely multi-annual plans and shared stocks. In his view it would be a waste of time if the RACs had to deal with these issues on their own. However, he is open to other suggestions and hopes that the Executive Committee will come up with a sensible idea. Otherwise he would suggest to drop the topic for now and move on.

The chairman admitted that he foresees a number of difficulties regarding the practical application of Sean O'Donoghue's suggestions. He thinks that the PRAC should not beat itself to regionalization as member states do not agree on this issue. While many member states favour regionalization others are against it. So far the discussion on how to incorporate regional stakeholders has not been solved and he wondered what would happen if two member states disagreed under a regionalized organization. Regarding funding he remarked that every RAC wants more funding while every member state is cutting funding to marine research. Therefore he doubts that at the moment it would be possible to increase funding. However, he asked Fuensanta Candela, who was attending the meeting as representative of DG Mare, if it was possible for the PRAC to make a claim under a different fund.

Fuensanta Candela replied that she is not an expert on this matter, but that she does know that the Commission is considering to include all funds, not only those for fisheries, in a broader framework. She did not know to what extent this will have an influence on the design of the EMFF in the future, e.g. whether member states will receive money which then will be transferred to someone else. She also was not sure if the EMFF could ever give a grant to an entity that is not a member state. Although the RACs have been established to provide advice to the Commission this does not mean that there cannot be meetings organized with member states. She mentioned that two other RACs have submitted requests about studies they would like to carry out. However, it is not possible to simply provide the money for that. The RACs will have to apply for a grant by writing a proposal and the Commission will have to carry out a selection procedure. Funding studies as such would pose a problem since all funds are competitive and a conflict of interests has

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to be avoided. It is likely that after the summer new funds will be made available for science-industry partnerships and that there will be a call for proposals. She also emphasized that amendments to the CFP proposal will be voted upon within the Parliament which has not happened yet. Therefore it is not too late to communicate the RAC's position to the Parliament. Regarding regionalization Fuensanta Candela noted that this is indeed a complicated issue. On the one hand the idea is to have a decentralized way of working where member states agree, but on the other hand a level playing field where everybody adopts the agreements is necessary. Different member states, however, have different national laws which might impose a problem and the Commission is concerned that what has been agreed can be revoked if it turns out to not be working well.

Sean O'Donoghue remarked that Fuensanta Candela has articulated his reasons behind suggesting that funding should come from the EMFF. While of course RACs can apply for different kinds of funding many other parties apply for these as well. He would like to have a specific fund for RACs that covers more than just administrative costs, but also scientific and technical matters. He also would like to see the establishment of an entity that covers all pelagic stocks and that in case of disagreement between member states, responsibility would automatically fall back to Council and Parliament.

Jesper Raakjaer also underlined that the PRAC has to try to allocate more funding in the future.

The chairman asked how the amendments should be taken forward and reminded the participants that it would be more effective to coordinate this effort with the other RACs.

Sean O'Donoghue suggested giving a mandate to the secretariat regarding drafting clear amendments on functioning and funding and to seek agreement with other RACs.

The chairman asked Gerard van Balsfoort if he was willing to take on this task and Gerard van Balsfoort replied that he could work out something with Sean O'Donoghue as long as the scope of this document will be reasonable and not too big. He also enquired about the timing.

Sean O'Donoghue explained that the amendments will have to be submitted before mid-September and that therefore the document should be produced by the end of July.

Ian Gatt proposed to drop the idea of decentralization since he has never been convinced of it for pelagic fisheries.

Christian Olesen was against authorizing the secretariat to put this issue forward as this is not the job of the secretariat, but rather of the Management Team.

Reine Johansson agreed that drafting this document should not be done by the secretariat alone, but maybe together with the chairman. He once again emphasized the importance of adopting a common position with all RACs.

Sean O'Donoghue explained his motivation for giving a mandate to the secretariat as being based on the fact that people do not yet agree on all of his proposed amendments.

The chairman agreed that it would be more appropriate to work out the details of the amendments within the Management Team and to also discuss this issue with other

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RACs. He asked the Executive Committee to agree that the Management Team would look into the funding issue and the Executive Committee agreed.

(6) Administrative matters

The secretariat gave a brief presentation regarding the preliminary financial report for 2011-2012, the work program for the new PRAC year 2012-2013 and the estimated budget for 2012-2013.

- **Financial report 2011-2012 (preliminary)**

The preliminary financial report could not take into account the travel costs of participants of the meetings from 10 and 11 July. Without these costs there is currently a deficit of € 3079. However this deficit is expected to rise to up to € 13.000 taking into account all costs until the end of the current budget year. An amendment has been submitted to the Commission asking permission to use the reserve of € 13.782. If the permit is granted, the PRAC will end the book year without a deficit.

- **Work programme 2012-2013**

The work program will focus on the development of LTMPs. Hereby the focus will be on a number of stocks including blue whiting, Celtic Sea herring, Irish Sea herring, North East Atlantic boar fish, Western herring stocks and the Western Baltic herring stock. Regarding short term management the PRAC will continue to provide advice on TACs to the Commission after publication of the relevant ICES advice. In the upcoming year the PRAC will further strengthen its relationships with science by collaborating with scientists from CEFAS and IMARES as well as actively engaging in research projects like GAP2 and MYFISH. Furthermore the PRAC will closely follow developments relating to the CFP reform, the benchmark meetings on Northeast Atlantic mackerel and WBSS herring, and MPA management measures. The General Assembly meeting is planned for 5 October 2012 directly followed by an Executive Committee meeting. On 4 October a Working Group I and II meeting will take place. More Working Group and Executive Committee meetings are planned for February, April and July 2013.

- **Budget 2012-2013**

The budget for 2012-2013 consists of a total amount of € 299.000 of which most will be used for staff costs (€ 130.056), another large amount for participation in meetings costs (€ 71.100) and a third large amount for interpretations costs (€ 40.320). The rest will be distributed between other items. The budget as presented during this meeting is based on contributions from 37 out of 40 members and seven member states. However, so far the PRAC has only received contributions or written confirmations from six member

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states, namely Ireland, UK, Sweden, Poland, Denmark and Germany. The remaining three member states (Spain, France and The Netherlands) have not yet confirmed their contributions.

- **Reimbursement costs**

The secretariat pointed out that according to the rules of procedure reimbursement claims for travel costs have to be submitted within one month of the meeting. In the past this rule has not always been enforced, but it will be from now on especially in light of the tight budget.

After the secretariat's presentation Sean O'Donoghue noted that three working group II meetings in 2013 would be rather many and suggested that one of the meetings should rather be a focus group than a working group meeting. It was clarified by Christian Olesen that the current schedule is only preliminary and that the listed options include both working and focus groups and that it has to be decided later when exactly a working group or focus group meeting will take place.

Fuentsanta Candela was wondering if the PRAC was again going to participate in the MIRAC meeting and this was confirmed by the chairman.

Ian Gatt suggested to include the European Parliament in the PRAC's collaborations, but Gerard van Balsfoort reminded the meeting participants that the PRAC already has a formalized relationship with the Parliament through PECH and a liaised parliamentarian.

(7) Fishing opportunities 2013 (Communication from the Commission to the Council)

The chairman asked Fuentsanta Candela if she would like to provide an overview of the coming year. She noted that the policy statement is positive about the developments of the status of many stocks. Also, ICES is now giving recommendations on large data-poor stocks and although the figures do not look alluring there is now a better basis for discussion. Furthermore the policy statement has been revised regarding data-poor stocks. RACs have taken the initiative to look into data-poor stocks which is now done by ICES and the Commission will in principle follow the ICES advice instead of a self-endorsed precautionary approach.

Gerard van Balsfoort expressed his surprise regarding the new policy document because last year it was said that the one which was then in effect would last for a while. The PRAC was not happy about the previous document and thinks that new one is better since it is less restrictive.

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Sean O'Donoghue was wondering about the implementation of the draft management plan for horse mackerel and if the Commission will follow the draft plan.

Fuensanta Candela said that on the 12th of July the Commission will table the proposal for anchovy and that it is intended to do the same with horse mackerel. She further remarked that the Commission will look at what the management plans developed by the RACs suggest which in turn ICES sees as a good basis for management.

(8) A.O.B.

Christian Olesen informed the Executive Committee about the Inter RAC meeting which he attended in February 2012 instead of Iain MacSween. The NWWRAC was not present as their chairman was not allowed to participate. During this meeting the idea came up to have a political entity where e.g. funding could be discussed among all chairmen. The BSRAC proposed in March a way of realizing this and the corresponding letter should be sent to the Executive Committee of the PRAC. The chairmen of the RACs should meet once or twice a year.

Jose Beltran raised a different issue. He explained that he will be going to the EFCA meeting on 12 July 2012 in Vigo and wanted to know if there is a specific PRAC position that he should put forward during this meeting.

The chairman thanked Jose for going to this meeting. Sean O'Donoghue said that there were a lot of unanswered questions following the last EFCA presentation and he wanted to know if any conclusions had been reached. He suggested to invite EFCA to the PRAC October meeting to present their findings again.

Reine Johansson thinks that the process takes too long. The representative of each RAC has to know exactly what the position of the specific RAC is. At the Vigo meeting it is important to know exactly what the RACs do, what should be discussed and what the position of EFCA is.

Christian Olesen raised a point related to Working Group I. He informed the Executive Committee that the recommendations for some herring stocks will have to be finalized on 11 July 2012 and that he needs the authorization of the Executive Committee to do so. This authorization was granted.

(9) End of ExCom meeting

The chairman thanked the participants for attending the meeting.