



PELAGIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Newsletter 2 / 2023

April – August 2023

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PELAC MEETINGS

HORSE MACKEREL STOCKS FOCUS GROUP (3 APRIL 2023, ONLINE)

On 3 April, the PelAC held an online Focus Group meeting covering the three horse mackerel stocks (Western, Southern and North Sea) in collaboration with the SWWAC, which was well attended by a select group of members of both ACs, the Commission as well as the key scientists involved in each of the three stocks. The focus of this meeting was on science, and to gather an understanding of the current status regarding each stock assessment and take stock of potential issues to address at a future benchmark.

During the meeting, presentations were held on the scientific state of play of the assessments for Western, Southern and North Sea horse mackerel and an update was provided on ongoing genetics stock-ID work on horse mackerel. Recommendations for improvement at a next benchmark were put forward by the different scientists involved.

Following these presentations, a detailed discussion on the specific issues identified in each assessment was held. There was strong support among Focus Group members to tackle an upcoming benchmark on horse mackerel holistically, covering the three different stocks combined. It was noted that the results of the genetic stock-ID work were considered timely and relevant, but are currently not yet included in stock assessments, which was something to highlight.

WGWISE put forward a detailed action plan to address the different issues currently encountered in the Western horse mackerel assessment. The list was long, and it was expected that some issues would be time and resource consuming to address in time for a next benchmark, thus underlining the urgency to ensure scientists from the different institutes are assigned to the identified tasks in a timely manner.

Additional suggestions for improvement were provided on horse mackerel, including a recommendation to compile data across the three stocks together, which was now not the case. There is a need for a clear picture of the biology first, without 'stock bias'. On data from the catch, IBTS and acoustic surveys, an overview of catch sampling was recommended as well as the presentation of the distribution by month and rectangle across the 3 areas. Length, age and maturity data by month and rectangle were recommended as well. Finally, on the egg surveys, it was recommended to compare spatial coverage with maturity data, identify the gaps and determine if MEGS index was still valid.

The Focus Group agreed that the Secretariat would finalise the meeting report covering the details of these presentations and recommendations, on short notice to put forward to the Commission as background information when developing its joint-request with the UK to ICES on a horse mackerel benchmark. It was agreed to adopt the report at the next PelAC meetings in April, and to put forward a recommendation to the Commission, raising the importance of organising a benchmark that deals with all three stocks combined (and not in isolation), as well as the importance of organising and assigning individual scientists to the different tasks/suggestions identified, notably in the action plan for Western horse mackerel. In addition, the recommendation would ask the Commission to ensure the output of ongoing genetic research on horse mackerel is taken onboard during the benchmark in and subsequent assessments, and to help push for a task force/Working Group within ICES to deal with genetic stock-ID work on a longer-term basis.

The full meeting report is available on the PelAC website [\[link\]](#).

WORKING GROUP I (19 APRIL-2023, ONLINE)

The April WGI meeting received a wide range of presentations from external experts. Paco Rodriguez-Tress (DTU Aqua) introduced his industrial PhD project on optimising small pelagic fish resources by using data from scientific and commercial vessels. The focus of his research thus far has been on linking

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fishing effort and acoustic measurements to biomass estimates from small pelagic fish stock assessments, to identify an accurate effort measure for small pelagics.

Dorte Bekkevold (DTU Aqua) presented her revolutionary research on the genetic differentiation of North Sea herring and Western Baltic Spring Spawning herring, which was of significant interest to WGI members. Researchers have developed a precise DNA-based tool to track the movements and mixing of herring from different populations. The tool has so far been implemented in data collection in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Ireland, which has shown highly distinct gene differences between North Sea autumn spawning herring and English Channel/Downs herring, and a possible shift in the importance of Baltic Sea autumn spawning herring in the North Sea and the Skagerrak.

Laurie Kell (SEA++) presented an evaluation of historical advice for blue whiting, herring, and mackerel, using a hindcasting approach. Hindcasting is a process of testing computer models by comparing them to actual historical observations to determine how well the models match historical records. The work explores the consequences had sustainable management approaches been implemented for these stocks, and the effect of non-compliance by Coastal States. It was found that adopting harvest control rules can protect from stock collapse, while fishing at levels above ICES advice increases the probability of stock collapse.

There were updates on several ICES workshops, including the workshop on rebuilding plans (WKREBUILD2) and the Herring Assessment Working Group (HAWG) for North Sea herring, herring in 6a North and 7b,c South, and Celtic Sea herring.

The Ecosystem FG update covered the outcomes of the PelAC workshop on an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (23 February) and a look ahead to the PelAC workshop on Energy Transition (20 April). The PelAC intends to draft separate advice based on the discussions at both events. Finally, Ed Farrell (Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation) presented a new, collaborative approach consisting of six guiding principles developed by the Irish seafood industry, to ensure inclusive industry involvement in the offshore planning process.

Please read the full report [here](#).

WORKING GROUP II (19 APRIL 2023, ONLINE)

The Spring WGII meeting saw members provided with an update on Coastal States negotiations on mackerel. Ana Leocadio from the European Commission joined the meeting and shared her disappointment, echoed by members, that a common position had not been reached in the negotiations. The lack of a scientifically-informed sharing arrangement between fishing nations remained a key concern articulated within the PelAC, and a letter on the subject, addressed to the Commission, was put forward to ExCom for approval.

Consultations on blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring were expected in May, with the Commission preparing for a 'general discussion' on the stocks. On trilateral negotiations, Mael le Drast addressed WGII, noting that there were plans for updating the management model for North Sea herring in 2023, with a WG formed to carry out this work.

WGII considered the recommendations of the WKRRMAC workshop held in Bremerhaven in 2019, evaluating which actions the PelAC was carrying forward and any areas for particular attention. Amongst

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the recommendations, the need for a Winter acoustic survey was highlighted and discussed. It was proposed that the Secretariat look into why previous work on this survey had been paused, and then consider whether it should be pursued further.

Discussions were held around an upcoming benchmark for mackerel - which members highlighted would be held in 2025. On an LTMS for mackerel, the Chair shared outcomes from work on mackerel MSE - showing potential combinations of Btrigger and fishing mortality to include within a management plan. The potential for a Focus Group on mackerel LTMS was discussed, and it was agreed an FG should be formed to look further progress conversations on this subject.

Other items addressed during the meeting included an update on horse mackerel stocks, as well as Greater silver smelt. An FG had been held on the three horse mackerel stocks, to consider work required before the next benchmark for the stocks, resulting in a detailed meeting report, an action plan and an accompanying letter to the Commission. These documents were shared with WGII, discussed and approved within the meeting.

The final section of the meeting was dedicated to a brief discussion of outcomes of the 2023 HAWG and a sprat workshop. Ed Farrell presented and it was agreed that a more detailed discussion of the PelAC's priorities on sprat would be tabled for the following WGII meeting. Meanwhile, the PelAC awaited ICES advice on sprat and an approach to co-developing advice with the NWWAC on this species was agreed.

Draft JRs on implementation of the Landing Obligation had been received and circulated to members.

Please read the full report [here](#).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (19 APRIL 2023, ONLINE)

The Executive Committee meeting commenced with a discussion of PelAC recommendations to the Commission, and the Commission's response to these recommendations. The Secretariat had undertaken an exercise to evaluate the impact of the PelAC's work, by means of tracking the responses received. Generally, there was disappointment that several key pieces of correspondence or advice had not been replied to. An action was taken to continue tracking the impact of advice in this way. It was also agreed that the Commission should be contacted to highlight this issue.

An update on the 'CFP Package' - delivered by the Commission on the 21st February 2023, and presented at an Inter-AC forum on the 9th March - was provided by the Chair. The package includes: a communication on energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector; an Action Plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries; a communication on the CFP today and tomorrow, and; a report on the CMO. Noting the scale and importance of the policy within the package, it was agreed it would become a standing item to check in on, and consider areas where the PelAC can feed into discussion.

A broader update on the Inter-AC forum was provided, and members were encouraged to proactively consider topics for discussion, and share these with the Secretariat.

There were no recommendations for approval from WGI, and recommendations from WGII were adopted. During the WGII recommendations discussion, a letter to the Commission on the outcome of Coastal States negotiations on mackerel was finessed. Members expressed their eagerness that the PelAC

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continue to put ideas on the table to support a resolution to the Coastal States political impasse on mackerel negotiations.

Finally, participants approved two new NGO members to the PelAC - Stichting Vissenbescherming and Ali Fish - after a brief discussion about the focus of the two organisations. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the NGOs, emphasising the collaborative and consensus-based way of working within the PelAC.

Please read the full report [here](#).

PELAC WORKSHOP “EXPLORING THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE PELAGIC FISHERIES SECTOR (20 APRIL 2023, ONLINE)”

On 20 April, the PelAC held an online workshop to kick-off an initial discussion at the PelAC on what it would entail for the pelagic sector to transition to zero carbon emissions as outlined in the Commission Initiative on Energy transition, released on 22 February 2023.

The first portion of the meeting consisted of contribution from various stakeholder groups, as well as the Commission. The Commission opened the workshop with a presentation on their Energy Transition initiative. The Commission covered the different actions outlined in the document as well as proposals for financial assistance in this arena. This was followed by a presentation by NGO Client Earth on decarbonising the EU fisheries fleet, whose most important message was the need to end fossil fuel subsidies. Ireland’s BIM gave a presentation on an industry’s perspective on what efforts are already ongoing at the level of fisheries and which areas could be further improved. BIM underlined that the fisheries sector overall was a relatively low contributor of GHG emissions compared to other sectors and the pelagic industry in particular was identified as ‘best in the class’, although this was no reason not to improve further.

DTU Aqua presented current research in the field of energy efficiency in fisheries, and concluded that the key win-win for energy transition in fisheries lies in joint accountability of management and responsible fishing. In the EU, accessing funding is not permitted for fisheries not in balance with the fishing opportunities.

In the second portion of the meeting, marine research institute MARIN offered an outsider’s perspective from the shipping industry on adaptations onboard vessels and use of alternative fuels. It was highlighted that when developing innovations, solutions must be designed to fit specific operations onboard vessels, and often implementing alternatives requires more space onboard vessels. It was also highlighted that currently, there are no prototypes of pilot projects yet developed for fishing vessels.

Finally, PelAC member and Working Group Chair UAPF concluded the workshop with a presentation identifying the main challenges faced by the industry and proposing a way forward in the discussions at PelAC level. The regulatory barriers as a result of the capacity ceilings of the CFP were underlined as a main constraint in implementing alternative fuels onboard fishing vessels. In addition, it was explained that many alternative fuels and technologies are not yet ‘mature’ for upscaling. It was estimated that the financial implications for the transition would lie between €22-36 billion to finance the EU fishing fleet to zero emissions, a considerable figure that the EMFAF alone would not be able to finance. It was also important to keep in mind that any transition in the fisheries sector would need to be accompanied by adaptations in other relevant sectors as well, such as ports and logistics.

Based on the presentations, the discussions and the identified constraints, it was agreed that the PelAC would work on defining a roadmap for its future work, following UAPF’s contribution as a first basis for

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discussion. The PelAC hoped to prepare more detailed advice on this topic later in the year or early next year

A detailed workshop report can be accessed on the PelAC website [\[link\]](#).

CFP PACKAGE FOCUS GROUP (10 MAY 2023, ONLINE)

On 10 May 2023, the PelAC organised a Focus Group meeting to discuss the CFP Package released by the Commission in February 2023, focusing on the three documents relevant to the PelAC: The Communication on the CFP, the marine Action Plan and the initiative on Energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

The Focus Group went over all the grey shaded boxes in the three documents (where the Commission either outline their plans/intentions or call on Member States to take action). The previous submissions by the PelAC on the consultations on Fisheries Action Plan in 2021 and the review of the CFP in 2022 were used as a backdrop in these discussions.

During the FG meeting, most of the discussion was centered around noticing which recommendations by PelAC were taken onboard in the 3 communications, and which were not. In each section FG members discussed which previous PelAC recommendations applied and were worth reiterating. On Energy transition, there was not enough time for discussions on a new topic in the time available. Therefore, the FG decided for the PelAC to issue limited feedback on macro issues of the initiative, such as financing, but flagging that the topic was considered important and that the PelAC would work on a more detailed advice at a later stage.

It was decided that the Secretariat would synthesise the various comments and reiterations into a new draft for review of the Focus Group. The main was to have a final draft ready for approval by the Executive Committee meeting in July.

The final recommendations adopted by the Executive Committee meeting in July based on this Focus Group meeting, can be accessed on our website [\[link\]](#)

WORKING GROUP I (6 JULY-2023, UTRECHT)

Members attending the WGI meeting on 6th July received a presentation from Dorleta Garcia on the ICES fishing advice for 2024. Mael le Drast, Jessica Demblon and Eva Carballeira provided an update from the European Commission on Coastal States negotiations for widely distributed stocks (North East Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring and blue whiting) and Trilateral consultations for North Sea herring. They noted that progress to date had been slow but remained hopeful for a resolution by Autumn 2023.

The Chair led a discussion on the PelAC recommendations for North Sea autumn spawning herring. General remarks on the recommendations considered integrating stock as well as species level recommendations and considering the ecosystem-based fisheries management approach in line with new ICES conservation advice. A proposal to finalise recommendations at the October PelAC WG meeting was accepted.

Edward Farrell updated members on the second workshop on Stock Identifications and Direct Allocations of herring to Stocks (WKSIDAC2) which focused on the use of genetics in stock identification.

Updates from the Ecosystem FG included an overview of a recent Energy Transition workshop and the Commission High Level conference on energy transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture. A proposal to

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engage with the European Commission Energy Transition Partnership was accepted by the PelAC. Terms of Reference for a joint FG on Spatial Dimension between the PelAC and NWWAC were proposed for adoption at ExCom.

Annabelle Jonker presented her MSc thesis mapping essential habitats for herring and mackerel in the North East Atlantic, a joint research project between the PelAC and Wageningen University and Research (WUR). It highlighted the important habitat characteristics to consider for both species and the PelAC agreed the results were valuable in understanding the impact of anthropogenic activities on fish stocks.

Once available the full report will be published on the PelAC website [[link](#)].

WORKING GROUP II (6 JULY 2023, UTRECHT)

Members attending the WGII meeting on 6 July received a presentation from Dorleta Garcia on the ICES fishing advice for 2024, covering Southern horse mackerel, Greater silver smelt in areas 6 and 7, and sprat in areas 6 and 7.

For Northeast Atlantic mackerel, several updates were shared. Claus Reedtz-Sparrevohn provided a summary of the ICES workshop on mackerel stock components, which concluded there is limited support for the hypothesis of three different mackerel stocks. Spatial protection measures for mackerel in the North Sea will be removed from the advice, as will use of the word 'component' in this context. This was followed by an update from Ed Farell on Uppsala University's genome project (supported by the PelAC), which is working on a reference genome for mackerel and collating samples for sequencing. Subsequently, there was an evaluation of progress against recommendations from the WKRRMAC 2019 meeting, with a view to informing future PelAC work on mackerel. Finally on NEA mackerel, a letter from the SWWAC with a request that the PelAC undertake research to understand climate change and ecosystem shifts affecting mackerel (and fishing patterns), was discussed. It was agreed to incorporate this issue into Mackerel FG work in 2024 – to ensure this is part of the benchmark on mackerel.

In relation to Southern and Western horse mackerel, an update on TAC alignment was shared concluding that this discussion was ongoing between the French and Spanish industries. In addition, draft PelAC advice on the implementation of bycatch quota for Western horse mackerel received consensus agreement to be submitted to ExCom.

The draft NWWAC/PelAC recommendations for sprat in area 6 and 7 and Greater silver smelt in areas 6 and 7 were shared, with only minor revisions to the smelt advice suggested relating to bycatch rate data and ecosystem considerations.

On the Landing Obligation, latest news from the Regional Member State groups on the Joint Recommendations for Discard Plans were communicated with members.

Once available the full report will be published on the PelAC website [[link](#)].

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (7 JULY 2023, UTRECHT)

A significant part of the Executive Committee meeting that took place on 7 July was devoted to reviewing the draft PelAC advice on the CFP Package. Only one minor comment relating to wording was raised by an OIG member, which was resolved during the meeting. Thus, the advice was swiftly adopted by all present.

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Members received updates from the Inter-AC Brexit Forum meetings of 15 May and 30 June, in which details of a new Working Group were shared, allowing the ACs to freely contribute technical ideas that may feed into the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. Further updates from the Inter-AC Brexit Forum included: review of the footnotes; new scientific requests (e.g. Inter-benchmark horse mackerel); guidelines for special stocks and non-quota stocks; management and enforcement measures by Scottish authorities; and MPA (MCZ) processes in UK waters.

Updates from the ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (WKSTIMP) workshop, which sought to define actions to achieve goals of the ICES stakeholder engagement strategy, were shared, along with the proposed structure of the ICES implementation plan.

The recommendations from WGI to submit an expression of interest to the Energy Transition Partnership following the HL Commission Conference, and to adopt the Terms of Reference for the joint PelAC-NWWAC Focus Group on Spatial Dimension, were formally adopted.

The recommendations from WGII to update the advice text for greater silver smelt for submission to the NWWAC, and to adopt the draft PelAC advice on the harmonisation and implementation of a bycatch TAC for Western horse mackerel, were formally adopted.

The meeting concluded with the Chair setting out proposed plans for a joint NWWAC-PelAC '20 year Anniversary of the AC's Event' in Dublin, Ireland on 14 March 2024. This was met with a positive reaction from members, who were in support of organising a joint-working session with the NWWAC and encouraged further exploration of accommodation costs.

Once available the full report will be published on the PelAC website [\[link\]](#).

All meeting minutes can be accessed on the [PelAC website](#).

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

NORTH WESTERN WATERS MEMBER STATES GROUP (04 APRIL, 18 APRIL, 31 MAY, 20 JUNE 2023, ONLINE)

04-04-2023: Jérôme Jourdain attended by virtual means on behalf of the PelAC the NWW Member State technical group meeting. Exchange of views with the Advisory Councils mainly focused on draft joint recommendation requesting exemptions to the landing obligation for January 2024 onwards. Drafts will be circulated to AC.

18-04-2023: Anne-Marie Kats attended the NWW Member State technical group meeting virtually on behalf of the PelAC. The Technical Group meeting of the NWW group on 18 April focussed largely on the progress with regard to the Joint Recommendations for revisions of the discard plans. An update was provided on the data compilation for justification of exemptions for both the NWW and SWW groups. The SWW group indicated the duration of exemptions are aimed for a period of 5-6 years. Both the NWW and the SWW agreed to circulate the draft JR once completed for comment to the Advisory Councils, though noting the large workload involved and the tight timing for the submission deadline to the Commission, the following week. All groups aimed to have draft JRs in place by the end of the week for adoption. On some exemptions, scientific content was still missing and provision was running late.

The PelAC explained it was holding its meetings the following day, so it would be useful to receive draft JRs, even if not yet complete, to present to members for discussion and ensure comments can be communicated to the groups in time to meet their final deadline.

31-05-2023: Sean O'Donoghue attended the North Western Waters Member States Technical Group meeting on the 31st May 2023 on behalf of the PelAC. The Irish Presidency announced that the Netherlands would take over the Presidency of the NWWMS Group from 1st July 2023 for a six months period and that the details of contact persons would be circulated. Sean O Donoghue raised a number of PelAC issues some of which were outstanding from previous meetings. On western horse mackerel the Chair mentioned that no new exemptions were envisaged in the discard plans instead it would be a rollover of the existing exemptions. The difficulty being encountered by the industry with the new horse mackerel by-catch provision was highlighted by the PelAC. On the ORE developments and the boarfish closures raised at previous meeting the Chair said these were not discussed at this Technical Group meeting but would be on the next Technical Group meeting scheduled for the week beginning the 19th June. The request from the PelAC in relation to mackerel joint deployment plan would be also dealt with at the next Technical Group meeting.

20-06-2023: Jérôme Jourdain joined NWW Member State technical group meeting. Agenda for this meeting included discussions on the proposed NWW recommendations for boarfish closures in NWW waters. The Chair suggested the PelAC should update discussions on these recommendations before to endorse it. Jérôme Jourdain highlighted that this could be discussed at WG II meeting in July and industries will be invited to discuss with their administration to clarify the need to update PelAC recommendations.

INTER-AC SECRETARIATS MEETING WITH COMMISSION (18 APRIL 2023, ONLINE)

On April 18, an Inter-AC meeting with the Commission and the Secretariats of the ACs took place online. First, the Commission updated the ACs on the recent release of the Commission CFP Package, making specific reference to the staff working document on the CFP communication for more details on the prior discussions leading up the communication.

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The Commission explained that the Package documents set out a number of actions and timelines. The Council Presidency will discuss and prepare conclusions on the Package as a whole, which are expected to be adopted at June Council. The Commission added there was also work ongoing at the level of the EP, where a report on the CFP document was to be expected, although the exact timelines were not yet known. There was also ongoing discussion on a EP report on the marine action plan, but it was not yet clear who the rapporteur would be nor what the expected timelines were. Finally, the Commissioner will be holding a structural dialogue with the PECH Committee later in April 2023.

The Commission explained that it will continue work on the energy transition initiative, as well as the marine action plan, which are wider documents in scope than the CFP. The documents have also been sent to the Economic and Social Committees and the Committee of Regions, so discussions are expected within these committees as well.

The documents set out concrete actions for the MS so it remains to be seen how this is received. The Commission acknowledged some actions need time and preparations. The CFP Package policy documents are not changing the current legislations, but are intended to start a dialogue on different levels; with MS as well as regional groups in particular. ACs form a part of that. The Commission is now dependent on how the MS and the regional groups take this forward, and wants to ensure ACs are actively and proactively involved. In addition to the work in the regional groups, the Action Plan also puts forward the setup of a 'special' MS group, with stakeholders as observers. The group will bring together MS experts from environment and fisheries linked to the implementation of the Action Plan, tasked with 'bridging' fisheries and environment. The group aims to strengthen MS awareness of the two communities but also to serve as a platform to discuss horizontal topics such as financing, and how MS are taking forward actions overall. According to the Commission, ACs are meant to become part of the group as stakeholder observers. The precise setup has yet to be discussed, but the aim was to have a structure in place before the summer of 2023, to be fully operational by September 2023.

On the Energy Transition initiative, the Commission drew attention to the High Level Conference planned on June 16 2023, and the establishment of the Energy Transition partnership (ETP) bringing together all stakeholders and ACs. The ACs are encouraged to be part of this event and follow-up discussions. Other elements to touch upon is the launch of the study 'fishers of the future', which is momentarily being carried out by an external contractor and will look into the different profiles of fishermen in the long-term, to feed into policy reflections. The Commission foresees to have this completed after the summer.

On the landing obligation, the MS are currently working on their JRs for Delegated Acts on the discard plans, and the Commission is preparing a guideline document to be discussed at the regional groups and the ACs, regarding data and evaluations. Finally, the ACs are encouraged to put forward nominees of the 'Package innovation award' to give visibility to a particular innovative project in their respective sea-basin.

The Commission went on for a brief update on finance and administration, introducing the new 'Financial liaison' to the ACs on matters pertaining to GA applications and funding. The Commission underlined its intent to reply within two months upon receipt of the application, and indicated it would finalise the new guidelines on the lump sum financing approach in the coming weeks.

The Commission reemphasized its intent with Inter-AC meetings, which was to discuss matters of common interest and administrative matters, and aims to hold three meetings with the ACs a year. The Commission will be responsible the organisation, the agenda's and the minutes and will provide interpretation. Finally, the Commission announced its intent to showcase a particular AC advice or recommendations on a rotation basis to DG MARE staff, as a means to disseminate content of AC work to the wider MARE staff.

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The PelAC asked the Commission for more advanced planning and earlier communication of dates for Inter-AC meetings, as they have recently often been communicated on short notice. On Energy transition, the PelAC welcomes the Conference planned on June 16 and reiterated a request already sent by email for a speaking slot at this conference to present the outcomes of a planned PelAC workshop on this topic.

EFCA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING (19 APRIL 2023, VIGO)

The EFCA Advisory Board meeting was held on 19 April 2023 in Vigo and was attended by José Beltrán on behalf of the PelAC.

Each AC presented their state of play and after this EFCA's Annual Report and the draft Single Programming Documents were discussed.

EFCA offered cooperation to promote ACs work on their social media channels and website and asked ACs to be proactive in sending the information they found interesting to EFCA audience.

The rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the EFCA Administrative Board was decided: Current (until 1 March 2024): LDAC with alternate CCRUP. From 2 March 2024 until 1 March 2025: CCRUP with alternate NSAC.

INTER-AC BREXIT FORUM (15 MAY 2023, ONLINE)

The Inter-AC Brexit Forum of 15 May was organised by the MAC. The Commission representatives provided members updates on the state of play in its discussions with the UK on key issues such as the revision of the footnotes, new scientific requests to ICES, guidelines on special stocks, non-quota stocks and management and enforcement issues with the Scottish authorities. After a brief exchange on these items, it was decided that the LDAC would send around a planner for a next date end of June.

ICES WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTATION STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (16 – 18 MAY 2023, COPENHAGEN/HYBRID)

Sean O'Donoghue and Esben Sverdrup-Jensen attended the ICES workshop on the Implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (WKSTIMP) that took place in hybrid format in Copenhagen on 16-18 May 2023. This workshop was an entirely different entity to the Workshop on Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (WKSHOES) scheduled for October 2023, to be chaired by Niels Hintzen and Steve Mackinson. The Chair felt that the hybrid element of the WKSTIMP workshop was ineffective for those joining online because they were permitted to join on 16 and 18 May, meaning they missed the discussions on 17 May. Those who attended in person found it very useful. The workshop sought to:

- Define actions to achieve goals of the ICES stakeholder engagement strategy.
- Identify options and related costs for the implementation of actions and propose different scenarios.
- Consider scenarios and draft elements of the implementation plan.
- Describe how the outputs of monitoring and evaluation can inform ACOM and SCICOM.
- WKSTIMP would report to ACOM and SCICOM.

The workshop report was published on 6 July and can be accessed on the ICES website [[link](#)]. The following structure of the ICES implementation plan was proposed by the workshop:

- The practicalities of engagement, including avenues of participation and participation process.
- Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of engagement, including procedures for feedback loops to stakeholders, monitoring processes, and annual reporting to SCICOM / ACOM etc.

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- Link to the communication strategy about stakeholder engagement.
- Review and revision of the strategy.

The report details 35 action points, which are split into short-, medium-, and long-term actions, emphasizing the significant amount of work there is to do.

SEAWISE PAN-REGIONAL CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP (15 JUNE 2023, ONLINE)

On 15th June 2023 Justyna Zajchowska (Consultant to Pew) took part in SEAWise Pan-Regional Co-Design Workshop on behalf of PelAC. The aim of the workshop was to gather stakeholders input on the content and functionality of the SEAWise EBFM (Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management) Tool and Toolbox. At the meeting there were many interactive discussions and breakout groups where Justyna had a chance to contribute to the way those SeaWise tools will look like. The SEAWise EBFM Tool and Toolbox are now in development and Advisory Councils should receive an update on state of affairs soon from the SEAWise project. The presentations from the day, alongside a mock up both the tool and toolbox, in conjunction with initial thoughts on visualising uncertainty can be found [here](#).

DG MARE'S EVENT ON THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE EU FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR (16 JUNE 2023, BRUSSELS/HYBRID)

The PELAC was represented by Tim Heddema.

The conference aims were to discuss and engage stakeholders in the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP). The speakers and stakeholders present covered a broad range of sectors and provided context to the ETP. Following the event, a leaflet was distributed to meeting participants which has been distributed to PelAC members providing a clear explanation of the ETP.

The purpose of the ETP to provide a coordinated approach to energy transition within the EU which will be undertaken through a series of meetings and workshops with the aim to develop a 'roadmap to climate neutrality by 2050' by 2024. The European Investment Bank participated in the conference and stated they would facilitate attraction of other funds.

The ETP is seeking an expression of interest for stakeholders. to stay informed of ETP activities with no formal agreement to join the partnership. It is not currently clear what resources formal partnership would require.

A study examining the cost of renewal of the whole EU fleet is to be published this year and will be shared with PelAC members once published.

SOUTH WESTERN WATERS MEMBER STATES GROUP (19 JUNE 2023, ONLINE)

The meeting on 19 June was a debrief meeting with the Chair of the SWW Group to inform the PelAC and SSWAC about the latest information. The PelAC was represented by Gonçalo Carvalho and the following was discussed:

- Cetacean bycatch - consultations still ongoing. Member States are unsure of what concrete measures to propose;

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- Landing Obligation - there was some concern on small pelagics in general, as STECF was expecting receiving more info from Member States. Concerns were also raised about skates and rays and also Alfonsinos.
- In general, the Commission seems to want to refine the Delegated Act, namely on limiting the gears that are considered under each exemption.
- Horse Mackerel - di minimis for area 9a will be granted again. High survivability in 8 might be granted, depending on discussions around the STECF report.
- Anglerfish – the Commission asked to remove pelagic trawlers from the exemption, as they aren't catching it.
- Blue whiting – the Commission is questioning but Member States will try to keep it, also because the exemptions in other areas will be maintained.
- Mackerel - existing exemptions will be renewed.
- Albacore tuna – the Commission doesn't want to accept it, due to STECF report not fully supporting it.
- Tomorrow they expect to advance the Ceteceans JR, get a better picture of the issues raised by STECF on particular exemptions (the Commission will present a draft of the report), finalise a letter on a red seabream exemption and also discuss issues regarding discussions with the UK with the Commission (aim is to have a unified voice).
- Timeline – the Commission wants to present draft DA on the exemptions on 5th of July, The Commission expects JRs by Friday 23rd, but Member States are looking at the 28th. The Commission needs to send the DA to Council and Parliament by the end of July.

The day after the SWW MS Group met online and unfortunately the PelAC representative wasn't available. From SWWAC we received a small update that both letters on Red Sea bream and UK consultations were approved.

INTER-AC BREXIT FORUM (30 JUNE 2023, ONLINE)

The Inter-AC Brexit Forum of 30 June was organised by the LDAC. The Commission representatives provided members updates on the state of play in its discussions with the UK on key issues such as the revision of the footnotes, new scientific requests to ICES, guidelines on special stocks, non-quota stocks and management and enforcement issues with the Scottish authorities. In addition, it was decided to include the UK MPA (marine conservation zone) and HPMA processes to the list of horizontal topics for the Forum to consider.

The next meeting of the Inter-AC Brexit meeting would be organised by the PelAC and it was decided to look for a date in October before the start of the EU/UK consultations.

MEETING BETWEEN DG MARE AND ADVISORY COUNCILS REGARDING ICES ADVICE (19 JULY 2023, ONLINE)

DG Mare initiated this online meeting open to all members of the ACs to hold a first discussion with stakeholders on the ICES advice released on June 30, before the Commission enters into full 'negotiation mode' in autumn and the busy timetables make it more difficult to engage with the ACs. The aim is to bring stakeholders closer to the internal DG MARE discussions in relation to the ICES advice. The Commission presented a brief summary of the ICES advice for 2024 for stocks in the North Sea, Celtic Sea, Irish Sea and West of Scotland, the advice for which is released end of June.

EXTERNAL MEETINGS

In general terms, the advice on NS stocks was presenting an overall positive trend (with a few exceptions), as was the West of Scotland area. The situation in the Channel, the Celtic and the Irish Seas was showing a more negative trend. The Commission went on to present the TAC advice for the individual stocks in these areas. For the PelAC, the only relevant stock covered was North Sea herring, which has a positive TAC advice for 2024 of +28.3% compared to the previous year.

In the subsequent discussion on the advice, the PelAC praised the Commission for taking this initiative to meet with ACs prior to entering negotiations, but noted that most of the advice covered by the PelAC remit is only released in September. The PelAC therefore only releases its annual TAC recommendations in the first week of October, the moment where the Commission almost immediately enters consultations. The PelAC expressed its appreciation that key Commission representatives have a tradition of attending the PelAC October meetings and advocated for this practice to continue. Furthermore, the PelAC underlined the importance of securing an opportunity to interact with the Commission immediately after the TAC recommendations are finalised, so that the members feel they have an input to the negotiation processes. The PelAC further noted that the busy negotiations often lead to a lack of Commission response to the PelAC recommendations, but it would be welcome to receive a response within the two-month period as set in the CFP.

A second point raised by the PelAC, was relating to certain stocks subject to multiannual plan or zero catch advice. The PelAC emphasized the need for the Commission to take a strategic look at these stocks, particularly at what is selected as the top-line ICES advice.

Thirdly, the PelAC pointed out there was a commitment agreed in the EU/UK bilateral in December 2022, for an urgent benchmark for Western horse mackerel, a stock currently faced with a zero catch advice. In terms of communication, the PelAC asked what the status was of this request to ICES and whether there were definitive dates for this benchmark, as this was a critical issue for the PelAC.

The Commission replied that it would not be easy to find a moment in October to engage with the PelAC separately to discuss its recommendations, explaining that this was an extremely 'resource hungry' period and the small team involved was already thinly spread over the large number of meetings taking place in autumn. But it would revert internally to see what could be done. The Commission noted recommendations from the PelAC were always very welcome and positively received.

On the topline advice, the Commission took note of the comment but raised that multiannual plans needed to be recognised by third parties in order to appear as the topline advice. Often these plans were not recognised by third parties such as UK and Norway, and in such cases the Commission has no choice but to respect ICES proceedings.

On Western horse mackerel, the Commission indicated that a reply to the PelAC on horse mackerel was in the pipeline and currently under review at the Commission hierarchy, so it should be received on the short-term. ICES had started the process, and the Commission flagged the uptake of genetics into the benchmark. In terms of timing, the Commission said it would likely move into 2024 and not sooner.

In terms of submitting responses to recommendations within the two-month reply period, the Commission indicated the need to find appropriate balance between this provision in the CFP, and the fact that a public reply within that timeframe, might reveal Commission negotiation strategies before the consultations have concluded. So it was important to be mindful of that so it wasn't always possible to reply within two months.

UPCOMING PELAC MEETINGS

3 & 4 OCTOBER 2023

WORKING GROUP I & II, GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

These meetings will be held in-person at the Grand-Hotel Karel V in Utrecht with interpretation in English, French and Spanish.

Please note that it is obligatory to register online. The registration link is shared by email and on our [website](#).

MEETING DATES FOR 2024

28 February 2024 – Working Group I & II and Executive Committee

Location: Paris, France

14 March 2024 – NWWAC/PelAC Anniversary Event

Location: Dublin, Ireland

NEW DATES: 23 & 24 April 2024 - Working Group I & II and Executive Committee

Online

For more information on the upcoming meetings please visit our [website](#).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

14 MARCH 2024 – NWWAC/PELAC ANNIVERSARY EVENT

We are pleased to announce that the NWWAC and PelAC will be hosting a joint Anniversary Event, celebrating 20 years of existence of the Advisory Councils, in the afternoon of Thursday 14 March 2024, in Dublin Ireland.

In addition, both ACs will take advantage of the occasion together to organise a joint-AC meeting in the morning prior to the Event to discuss horizontal issues of common interest. The meetings will take place in Dublin Castle and will be followed by a dinner.

We will be sending more details on the agendas, final programme and registration process in due course, but for now we kindly ask you to mark this date into your calendar.

We look forward to celebrating this occasion with you on March 14!

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