

INTERAC meeting minutes

16th October 2018, Brussels

Veronika Veits of DG MARE opened the proceedings and, on behalf of the Director General of DG MARE, Mr Machado, welcomed the participants. She noted the importance of cooperation with ACs, which proved essential for the implementation of the CFP (economic and social sustainability, regionalisation), she thanked all the ACs for the contributions received. She recalled that the two main proposals for EC regulations to facilitate the CFP, currently in the triologue phase, were the new EMFF and the revised regulation on the fisheries control system. Where MAPs were concerned, she reminded the meeting that, in the spring, two MAPs had been presented, of which one was for the Western Mediterranean; she specified that the framework for the proposal reflected the North Sea MAP, however she stressed that for the Western Mediterranean the approach was ad hoc and reflected the specific characteristics of the Mediterranean. Ms Veits hoped that a political agreement would be reached before the EP elections, spring of the following year. On the issue of the proposal for a regulation on technical measures, she announced that a compromise had nearly been reached, which would consist in establishing a simpler approach through regionalisation, in order to protect common and European objectives, she expressed the hope that in this case too, a political agreement would be reached before the election of the new EP. Where the MAP for small pelagics in the Adriatic was concerned, she noted that the latest developments at EP level were worrying, because the previous week the PECH report did not take the management approach into account, and therefore it would be necessary to wait and see what would happen during the plenary session of the EP the following November. She opened the floor for the debate.

Neils Wickman of the NSAC suggested carrying out an assessment of the opinions prepared by the ACs so as to verify to what extent they have worked and how they have been implemented.

Guus Pastoor of the AAC asked about the mandate of the various representatives attending this meeting and what was the expected outcome of the meeting.

Veronika Veits replied that DG MARE had taken note of the NSAC proposal, considering it a very relevant analysis. Regarding Mr Pastoor's request, she suggested adding it to the agenda item "any other matters".

The new EMFF

Veronika Veits went on to illustrate the new EMFF and announced that the future budget amounted to 6,140 billion euros, which was a 5% reduction compared to the current budget. She proceeded to present the four priorities:

1. Promoting sustainable fisheries and the conservation of marine biological resources (including ACs funding);
2. Contributing to food security in the EU through aquaculture and competitive and sustainable markets;
3. Encouraging the growth of a sustainable blue economy and fostering prosperous coastal communities;
4. Strengthening international governance of the oceans and facilitating safe, clean and sustainably managed seas and oceans.

Ms Veits emphasised that the aim of the new EMFF was to create greater flexibility for Member States, further simplification and the establishment of a “*common rule book*”. She hoped that the draft report from the EP would be ready by January and she added that there should be a report in the Council Working Group with all the comments from the MS at the end of this year/ beginning of next year.

The Chair of the MEDAC intervened to announce that MEDAC meetings had been held the previous week during which, among other matters, the new EMFF had been discussed. The debate had been lively, especially on the point concerning the possibility of supplementary cessation of fisheries activities, the reopening of permanent cessation and the withdrawal of periodic cessation of fisheries activities as a measure. He announced that periodic cessation of fisheries activities was an important measure to limit fishing capacity within national management plans, therefore concern had been expressed that this tool could disappear. The Chair informed the Meeting that, on 10th December, the members of the MEDAC would continue discussing the new EMFF and the DG MARE would be informed should a new position be reached in this regard. He went on to mention the EC’s financial contribution to the ACs, highlighting how, for the MEDAC, the costs related to interpretation and translation were still a significant problem, because almost all members expect interpretation to be provided for their language, as was the case with the Maltese member. He concluded by underlining that interpretation should be guaranteed for all members and he hoped that this matter would be discussed again under the Agenda item concerning administrative/financial issues.

Veronika Veits informed those present that the fleet measures had shifted from temporary to supplementary cessations and the EC was aware that there was a strong inclination to return to the rules in force. On the issue of funds for the ACs, she recalled that, for now, it had been decided to assign the same funds to all the ACs and it was difficult to find an objective criterion, in any case this would be discussed within DG MARE

Revision of the control regulation

Veronika Veits introduced this Agenda item in order to point out that there was a considerable discrepancy in the application of sanctions from one MS to another, and that it was important to make better sharing of controls available. She added that the proposed revision also included recreational fisheries, so as to determine how many operators there are and how much they catch. She concluded by saying that co-decision was underway and that a draft report by the EP should be presented by the end of the year. Lastly, she announced that, at the end of the current year, there would be a workshop with the MS with the aim of gathering information on best practices to simplify the system and to shift from a paper to a digital system.

The MEDAC Chair informed the Meeting that the MEDAC had met the previous week to discuss the revision of the regulation on the fisheries control system, and that in December an additional meeting was scheduled. During the Working Group meeting there had been a heated debate on the issue of sanctions, in particular on the issue of proportionality of sanctions to the numerical value and production. He pointed out that the value of production changed constantly for each season and location, this made it very complicated to quantify a percentage.

Technical measures

Veronika Veits underlined that there were still a lot of outstanding issues, she said that the fourth triologue had been held on 4th October but a compromise had not been reached. Progress had been made towards a common European regulation in order to achieve regionalisation. She further informed the Meeting that there had been a debate on by-catch and other aspects that need to be discussed. She concluded by citing

the outstanding matters, due to differences in the positions of the co-legislators on the protection of species and habitats and on electric fishing which triggered a heated debate. She hoped that another triologue would be organised before the end of the current year.

MAPs

Veronika Veits proceeded to present the MAP proposal for demersal species in the Western Mediterranean, an area in which fisheries are typically mixed. She informed the Meeting that a fishing effort regime had been established for all the vessels operating in the area. With regard to the draft report by the MEP Aguilera, she expressed the hope that the November PECH meeting would manage to vote on it. Furthermore, in the Council progress had been made with a compromise presented to the MS, it was feasible to expect that this proposal would be adopted before the EP elections.

Oceana (Marta Carreras) intervened to present the position of the 40% segment of the MEDAC on this MAP. She informed the meeting that this plan served to reverse the dramatic situation of over-exploited stocks in the Mediterranean. She reiterated that it was necessary to limit trawl fisheries at least up to 100 metres and leave these areas for smaller gear. She concluded by saying that she considered the EC proposal for reducing fishing effort to be positive, but perhaps alternative ways to manage catches should be found, such as adequate catch limits for the Mediterranean.

FP9 Horizon Europe 2021-2027

DG MARE revealed that €100 billion had been allocated to research and innovation in the FP9. The meeting was informed that Horizon Europe was divided into three pillars, but the DG MARE representative focused on the second concerning fisheries research, which concerns: global challenges and industrial competitiveness. She informed the meeting that in the part related to food and natural resources there were seven areas of intervention including seas and oceans: sustainable fisheries and aquaculture; resilience of marine ecosystems; ocean governance; digital technologies for the oceans, blue value chain, solutions based on nature, blue innovation. Where the financing of the programme was concerned, she said that the negotiations were ongoing and that there was talk of multi-annual strategic coverage. On this issue, a stakeholder consultation would be launched to define the issues that should be covered by the FP9, she asked the ACs whether they were interested in providing a contribution.

The Executive Secretary of the MEDAC expressed willingness to contribute; on the issues to be discussed, she suggested that studies could be financed on pollution and climate change in particular, so as to have a more holistic approach.

LO

Elisa Roller (DG MARE) announced that during the EP hearing last week on the Landing Obligation a map of the current situation was prepared to see how this landing obligation was applied. She emphasised that, in order to facilitate the implementation of the LO, available data on discards must be improved. Furthermore, she noted that there had been a lack of investment by the MS regarding selectivity and data collection in the respective OPs. She informed the Meeting that many LO research projects were under way but they did not include the aim of investing in the fleet and making the necessary changes; she noted that there was still much work to be done regarding the question of controls.

The MEDAC Chair intervened to communicate that the LO only concerned only the species in Annex III of the Mediterranean Regulation. He further noted that the discarded fisheries product should be marketed separately from products for human consumption, it would therefore need separate structures and so it would be necessary to find an industry that was interested in investing in this kind of product. He pointed out that, in the eight Mediterranean Member States there were no structures on land that were able to store, freeze and sell unintentional catches. He therefore informed the Meeting that advantage was being taken in the Mediterranean of *de minimis* exemption, and when this percentage had been used up, someone would have to bear the costs incurred for the destruction of this part of the catch. He underlined that the MEDAC had explained to MS that exemption was possible for economic reasons, because in actual fact there were no handling stations on land to manage and transform this product, and the MS had not allocated resources in their OPs for the creation of such stations. In addition, the MEDAC had indicated, with to the support of data from scientific research, where higher numbers of undersized specimens were captured and it had been suggested to the MS that they could prepare management plans for those species so as to pursue the goal of the CFP of not capturing the undersized specimens.

Oceana (Marta Carreras) was keen to point out that the NGOs had a different view and that the goal of reducing by-catch could only have positive results if fisheries were more selective fishing, so it would be opportune to focus on other selective fishing gear.

Administrative and financial issues

Pascale Colson (DG MARE) informed the Meeting that there had been some improvements by the ACs on how to they convey recommendations to the Director-General Machado, copying the messages to her and her colleague Amalia. On the matter of new small-scale fisheries associations, it was emphasised that, in the delegated act, the number of ExCom members could be increased from 25 to 30, with prior consultation of the EC, however she pointed out that this had not always happened and she underlined that the EC must always be consulted. She specified that the Secretariat must be independent from the members in a transparent way, and the work programmes envisage specific tasks with a schedule. She concluded on the issue of Brexit, announcing that the United Kingdom would become a third country from 1st January 2021, so members would be able participate in the ACs as observers.

Martine Aussems (DG MARE) intervened to suggest sending an e-mail relative to the financial statement with comments and any questions, so as to receive further information. She recalled that, with regard to the financial statement, it was necessary to change the title on the basis of the reference period and if it had been amended. Lastly, she reiterated that when a payment was requested, it was necessary to send in the final report and ask explicitly for the amount due.

Elisa Roller informed the Meeting that three ACs had been audited this year and the results were very good. She said that two further audits were planned for the following year, one for the MEDAC and the other for the South Western AC. In addition, she announced that a new financial regulation had come into force the previous summer which introduced some simplifications, however funding for the ACs would remain annual.

The Executive Secretary of the MEDAC took the floor to point out that on 20th April a letter (ref.115/2018) had been sent to Veronika Veits asking for a larger allowance in the new EMFF for interpreting and translation. She pointed out that this issue was important as members of all MS were increasingly asking to be allowed to express themselves in their native tongue, resulting in a considerable economic burden. She expressed the hope that this request would be taken into consideration and included in the new EMFF.



Elisa Roller intervened to inform the Meeting that they were aware of the fact that each AC had specific problem areas and that a solution would be sought.



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Co-funded by the European Union

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