



Ref.:94/REL

Rome, 9 July, 2015

**MINUTES OF THE INTER-AC MEETING**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015, Albert Borschette Conference Center, Brussels**

Participants: The MEDAC delegation was made up of the President, Giampaolo Buonfiglio, the Executive Secretary Rosa Caggiano and the Executive Assistant Erika Monnati

Items of the Agenda:

**1. Communication on fishing opportunities for 2016**

Mr Penas opened the meeting presenting an overview of the evaluation of the status of the stocks: good and positive in the North sea and Baltic sea, whereas in the Mediterranean appalling results were registered and an extreme high level of uncertainties due to the fact that Mediterranean stocks are characterized by multi-specificity with over 300 different species. Therefore, it is hard to evaluate them, especially since they were not subject to any kind of systematic evaluation in the past. In addition, many stocks are shared with third countries where the management of stocks is not a priority.

The representative of MEDAC explained that there is no quota in the Mediterranean but the fishing effort can be kept under control through LTMP. He suggested that the overcapacity can be dealt with the demolition funded by the EMFF until 2017, but cannot exclusively rely on that because these resources are perhaps too limited to solve the overcapacity compared to the levels required by the assessments of the resources. As far as the problem of scientific evaluation of stocks, he clarified that even though some effort has been made it is still very limited, almost 30 stocks evaluated, the vast majority of stocks remain unknown. One of the limits of the LTMP is the time for approval that has to follow the procedure necessary to have the trilogue approval and if a dozen LTMP were needed to protect different various it will take decades. MEDAC started working by creating focus groups in specific geographic areas tackling specific stocks. For example, in the Gulf of lions MEDAC is trying to provide inputs for the hake because it is hard to draft a management plan with no or few available scientific data in terms of F. He confirmed that scientific data for Mediterranean stocks are old and only available for some specific stocks, but despite the grim picture he informed that some slight encouraging changes have been registered. Problems such as the increase in the temperature of the water is encouraging exotic species to cross the Suez Channel affecting indigenous population. He eventually stressed the need of more scientific data and an easier procedure to simplify the adoption of management plans.

Lowri Evans took the floor to point out that the way MEDAC is working is really revolutionary in terms of engagement and the Mediterranean is the best example of regionalization, in a complex situation both from the biological and the political point of view. In terms of overcapacity, she clarified that from different input MS have provided through National Operating Programmes. As far as the lack of scientific data, she announced that the will be allocating more projects into the Mediterranean to anticipate the legal coming into force of the landing obligation.

Mr Buonfiglio thanked the EC for the acknowledgements of MEDAC's work. The reduction of the fleet might be one of the areas of intervention, but it is still unclear how much a reduction of fleet can influence fishing mortality. It is important to implement other policies such as technical measures, marine protected areas, nursery areas interdicted to fishery, etc.

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He eventually suggested to EC to consider the possibility of shortening the time for the preparation of management plans (linked also to the reform of technical measures) taking advantage, for example, of the chance to propose emergency regionalized management plans that could be a valuable tool when necessary.

## **2. State of play of discard plans for 2016**

Dominic Rihan informed the floor that the NWWAC and NSAC have submitted their joint recommendations and he welcomed the good results and the improved level of engagement ACs have achieved with MS. He pointed out that the next STECF meeting scheduled in July will examine the joint recommendations.

Lowri Evans stressed the importance that for the summer Plenary session of the STECF no issues will remain pending.

## **3. State of play of technical measures framework**

Mr Penas provided an overview on this matter and he pointed out that the EC is moving towards a framework where the EC outlines basic technical rules, with a series of horizontal rules allowing regionalization to define more specific technical measures, as for example it is the case for closure areas where the EC will keep these areas whose value added is demonstrated and scientifically proved. He finished by saying that basic rules will be simplified and hopefully the EC will be able to present a proposal by the end of the year.

## **4. Evaluation of control regulation**

DG MARE informed that the whole system introduced when this regulation was adopted will be reviewed, as foreseen by the legislation itself. The objective of the reform was to simplify the system, encourage cooperation with MS and increase the involvement of stakeholders. The main challenges for the successful implementation of the CFP were the simplification and reduction of the administrative burden and fight of the IUU fishing through the cooperation between MS and stakeholders.

Lowri Evans encouraged participants to submit their point of view, to advice the Commission on the chances of improvement, to highlight transboundary problems and mechanism of flexibility. She also informed that MS have submitted their evaluation on the control regulation, but it seems that they are underestimating technology in the control area and the issue of level playing field/regionalization.

MEDAC Chairman took the floor to point out that a higher involvement and empowerment of fishermen is necessary to improve the culture of compliance. He outlined the limit of the command and control system because a whole series of IUU has been practiced outside the professional sector. He informed about some aspects of controls adopted by Prudhomie and Cofradias but he believed that a greater involvement of fishermen could be of great help. He suggested that national legislation should encourage fishermen in each port because EC Reg. 1224/2009 didn't encourage empowerment at all but it only increased restrictions and sanctions. As far as technology is concerned, he believed that VMS is of help but it still under the command and control system. He provided an example of good practice in some areas where fishermen collaborated with local Administrations and WWF in Catalonia.



The representative of LDAC sided Mr Buonfiglio statement by informing that in Spain illegal fishing has been banned where community spirit took over. If fishermen have more responsibility they feel obliged to comply more.

The representative of PELAC registered a low level of illegal fishing because pelagic fleet is characterized by few and bigger boats. So compliance is encouraged by peer pressure.

The representative of MEDAC took the floor to point out that the new EMFF established that anyone who has been sanctioned for “serious infringements” (EC Reg.1224/2009 which provides for the IUU list, and the principle of conditionality introduced by EC Reg. 508/2014 on the EMFF) will not have access to funding. In principle somebody discovered to be responsible for infringement should be encouraged to leave is not entitled to any incentive to leave the industry.. He, eventually asked the EC whether it would be possible to know the result of the application of the point system, what type of sanctions have been allocated to what infringements.

Lowri Evans replied by explaining that MS implementation of sanctions has been extremely low, particularly in some MS and she also added the EMFF cannot be modified. Another representative of DGMARE added that the fact that MS don't know what their neighbors are doing is a limit of the sanctioning system. He also added that a working group on compliance has been created and in its next meeting, scheduled in November they will provide example of good practice in the sanctioning system.

Mr Penas added that national administrations are not asking for a revolution but they are only thinking of making slight adjustment, so if stakeholders believe there is some kind of compliance to achieve through peer pressure it would have to be them who propose it. He then gave the floor to his colleague who discussed of ecolabelling, announcing that a consultation on ecolabelling has been launched in early May and will end in July. Any input on fishery and aquaculture ecolabel will be much appreciated

The representative of the NSAC asked for a clarification on what it is considered organic and biologic

The representative of MEDAC seems skeptical about the distinction between ecologic and organic because fish products normally depend from the ecologic conditions. A formal certification of the marine environment will the offer a guarantee of the fish products.

Mr Bianchi thanked everyone for their contributions and concluded that results will change if ecolabelling will be used as a market or legislative tool

## 5. Administrative and financial matters (Q&A)

The representative of NWWAS lamented the scarcity of both financial and human resources to carry out the new tasks demanded by the CFP reform. In addition, he pointed out that for some ACs translations and interpretations are very resource demanding, therefore he asked whether it would be possible to review the model of funding and go back to the old way when two lines of funding were allocated: one to carry out organic work and the other one for translations and interpretations only.

The representative of the NSAC proposed to set up a focus group to look at the funding structure and the necessity for funding.



In addition to the tasks requested by the new CFP, ACs have to face the task requested by the landing obligation, environmental issues and Natura 2000 sites, linguistic needs etc.

MEDAC supported the creation of this focus group and suggested to take advantage of art 37 of the EMFF. This, in fact provides for funding according to National OP. It would be interesting to see if MS could provide for a small quota that will significantly help us. MEDAC is trying to explore this type of funding and see whether the National Administration could possibly help by either by hosting the ACs or through some sort of contribution in kind.

The LDAC renewed its request for a restricted meeting with DG MARE staff to have an open discussion on the changes introduced to the Guidelines, and some more specific question on how the final EC contribution is calculated, on how to have access to other source of funding without breaking the rules set up by the EC, to exchange best practices with one another.

Mr Bianchi welcomed the idea of another restricted meeting and encouraged the ACs to propose a date for the meeting. As far as art 37 is concerned he clarified that this article was introduced by the European Parliament to encourage small scale fishermen participation and he outlined that it could be a support for participation in the ACs but cannot be used as a grant.

He encouraged the ACs to review their expenditures and make room for translations, which will be essential to carry out the debate on technical measure and regionalization, bearing in mind that the financial framework is fixed for another 7 years.

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