



ANNUAL REPORT 2005 - 2006

By Ingvild Harkes

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Establishment and functioning of the Pelagic RAC

The Pelagic RAC was established on the 16th of August 2005 at its inaugural meeting in Hotel Schiphol A4 near Amsterdam. The meeting was attended by more than 50 people from various Member States and the Commission. At the meeting, which was mainly procedural, chairman Iain MacSween from the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation was elected. Two Working Groups were established: Working Group I for herring and mackerel chaired by Christian Olesen (DK), and Working Group II for blue whiting, horse mackerel and other species chaired by Sean O'Donoghue (Ireland). The secretariat, based in Rijswijk (the Netherlands) was originally staffed by Rob Banning and Ingvild Harkes, but the former left for the United States. He has been replaced by Gerard van Balsfoort. The three chairmen and secretariat of the Pelagic RAC have formed an informal 'management team' to deal with the day-to-day running of the RAC.



Inaugural meeting 5 September 2005 in Amsterdam



Pelagic RAC Chairman Iain MacSween and Rob Banning (left) and Ingvild Harkes of the Secretariat

The Pelagic RAC has members from more than 60 organisations, with a division of 2/3 from the fisheries sector and 1/3 from so-called other interest groups. The executive committee consists of 22 members with sector representatives from 10 member states, i.e. the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, and the UK, as well as international organisations and environmental NGOs.

Executive Committee members

Fisheries Sector:

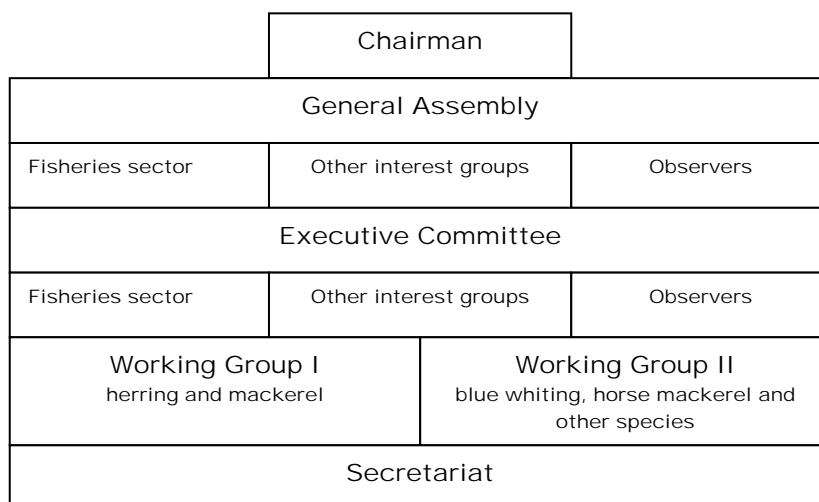
Denmark	Christian Olesen
France	Antoine Dhellemmes
Germany	Eckart Riediger
Ireland	Sean O'Donoghue
Netherlands	Wim van der Zwan (formerly Gerard Zwijnenburg)
Poland	Jaroslaw Zielinski
Portugal	Jorge Abrantes
Spain	Javier Garat Perez
Sweden	Reine Johansson
UK	Andrew Tait
AIPCE-CEP	Susane Røntved (formerly Peter Bamberger)
European Association of Fishing Ports and Auctions	John Wallace (formerly John Patterson)
ETF	Peter Sand Mortensen
European Fishmeal Association	Helge Korsager
North Sea Women's Network	Nicki Holmyard

Other Interest Groups:

EBCD	Konstantinos Kalamantis
European Anglers Alliance (EAA)	Jacques Cornec
Seas at Risk/North Sea Foundation	Christine Absil
WWF European Policy Office	Carol Phua (formerly Charlotte Mogensen)

The interest of other stakeholders, e.g. environmental NGOs and consumer organisations, is limited as our area of work (pelagic fishery) is either no priority for them or their participation is obstructed by their limited capacity in terms of manpower or funds. Hence, despite ongoing efforts to raise their interest, only 4 out of 8 seats for 'other interest groups' in the executive committee are occupied.

Structure of the Pelagic RAC



Functioning of the Pelagic RAC

The Pelagic RAC has developed itself into an active and functional organisation. Aside from the General Assembly, in the course of 2005-2006 the Pelagic RAC has organised 4 executive committee meetings and 6 working group meetings. Attendance to the meeting ranged from 26 to 55 people representing both the fisheries sector as well as other interest groups and with usually a number of observers from third countries and representatives of the Commission. The meetings have been successful in that important decisions were reached on the basis of consensus and a good working relationship between all members has been established. In the process, the strategy and core business of the Pelagic RAC has become clearer, while collaboration with other RACs when dealing with horizontal issues is also very constructive. All these aspects are contributing to the capacity of the RAC to adequately deal with requests from the Commission and other issues related to the sustainable management of pelagic fish stocks.

On the 15th of May 2006, a mid-term activity and translation report have been submitted including the financial report. The report was accompanied by a proposal for an amendment of the budget 2005-2006. The reports were approved and the second instalment of the first 50% of the budget was transferred to the Pelagic RAC. On the 16th of October 2006, the final activity report and report for interpretation were handed, including the financial report that has been subject to an external audit.

The Pelagic RAC is in the process of finalising its procedures.



One of the first invitations the Pelagic RAC got was to the Fisheries Directors meeting in Edinburgh during the time of the British Presidency. This was an excellent occasion to exchange views amongst the various representatives of the Member States on issues related to the Common Fisheries Policy, but also the role of the RACs.

Pelagic RAC meetings

Title of the meeting	Place	Date	Country of origin of the representatives involved in the meeting
General Assembly	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	5 Sep 2005 (half day)	53 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Belgium, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Schiphol Amsterdam, Netherlands	5 Sep 2005 (half day)	53 participants from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Belgium, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Dorint Novotel Hotel, Badhoevedorp, Netherlands	4 Nov 2005 (half day)	34 participants (including 3 scientists from ICES) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Dorint Novotel Hotel, Badhoevedorp, Netherlands	4 Nov 2005 (half day)	34 participants (including 3 scientists from ICES) from: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group I	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	13 Feb 2006 (half day)	43 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	13 Feb 2006 (half day)	43 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	Hotel Eurovillage, Brussels, Belgium	14 Feb 2006	18 participants (plus observers): Netherlands, Denmark, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive Committee	MAPA (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación), Madrid, Spain	13 March 2006	26 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).

Working Group I	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	21 June 2006 (half day)	32 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Poland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Working Group II	Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam, Netherlands	21 June 2006 (half day)	32 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Poland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).
Executive committee	Scotland House, Brussels, Belgium	5 July 2006	29 participants: Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, UK, Norway (and international organisations).

Advise and recommendations

Pelagic Trawl Cod Ends

At our second meeting on the 5th of September 2005 a paper was presented by the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Organisation (SPFO) proposing changes to Pelagic Trawl Cod Ends to improve safety on board of vessels. This recommendation was sent to the Commission in October and rewarded with a positive reply in that our suggested modification for operating pump aboard systems were adopted.

Action plan for Northeast Atlantic Mackerel

In October 2005, an action plan for Northeast Atlantic Mackerel was submitted to the Commission including, amongst others, an inquiry concerning the ICES/ACFM advice, the adaptation of management objectives, and suggested improvements for scientific research. The issues were taken up and answered by ICES. The rationale of the current approach was explained and cooperation with the industry, in terms of providing data, was welcomed.

Recommendations 4 November 2005

On the 4th of November 2005 at a Working Groups meeting, recommendations were drafted concerning the ICES/ACFM advice and the TACs and quota for 2006.

Clyde herring (Division VIa)

- Advice is adopted without alterations, resulting in a status quo TAC.

Celtic Sea and Division VIIj herring

- The TAC to be reviewed before the end of 2006 in the light of new scientific advice from ICES.

Herring (Division VIa South and VIIb,c)

- Request that a higher TAC than the status quo should be considered for next year based on the implementation of an industry management plan over the last five years (as outlined in the ACFM advice) and also on the views expressed at the meeting on the abundance of the stock. It was also agreed that the management targets should be reviewed.

Irish Sea herring (Division VIIa)

- Advice is adopted without alterations.

Herring in Division VIa (North)

- The drafting of a management plan based on the harvest control rule that is put forward by ACFM, and which includes a TAC constraint of +/- 15%, and with a flexibility of +/-10% over 2 years. This is a general requirement and should be included for all the stocks where there is a management plan.
- The TAC for 2006 should be set in accordance with the new management plan.

Herring in Subdivisions 22-24 and Division IIIa (Spring Spawners)

- Advice is adopted without alterations.
- However, there is great uncertainty about what is the actual advice, and it is recommended to ACFM to give more clear information.
- The industry requests clear information on advised TAC.

Herring in Subarea IV, Division VIId and Division IIIa (Autumn Spawners)

- Set the TAC at -15% compared to 2005, with the provision that the EC looks into the causes of the fluctuations and development of the stocks.
- The management plan should be amended to include a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10% with a maximum of 2 years.
- The EC is requested to seek clarification of the relationship between paragraphs 5 and 6 in the advice.

Norwegian Spring-Spawning herring (Atlantoscandian Herring)

- TAC based on 2005 advice (890,000 tonnes).
- The management plan should be amended to include:
 - o A TAC constraint of +/- 15% and,
 - o A year-to-year flexibility of +/-10% with a maximum of 2 years.
- The objectives in the management plan should be reviewed, as they seem overly conservative.

Northeast Atlantic Mackerel (combined Southern, Western and North Sea spawning components)

- The TAC is already agreed by the Coastal States and the working group expressed its disappointment at the outcome.
- The Group recommended that the management plan should be amended to include:
 - o A +/- 15% TAC restraint and,
 - o A year-to-year flexibility of +/- 10% with a maximum of two years (this should be included in the TAC and quotas regulation for 2006).

- The management plan should be reviewed to prioritise the different decision rules.
- The Group recommended that in the future consultations between the Coastal States on TACs should not take place before the Pelagic RAC has been heard.

Mackerel Action Plan

ICES response to the pelagic industries of the EU, Norway and the Faroe Islands on its agreed mackerel action plan was noted and in particular the changes adopted in the research annex of the Coastal States agreement as a result of this advice.

Blue Whiting Combined Stock (sub areas I-IX, XII and XIV)

- Accept the industry's (EU, Norway and Iceland) management plan for blue whiting with a TAC of 2 million tonnes for 2006 and progressively decreasing to 1.5 million tonnes over five years if required, with a +/- 15% TAC restraint and a year-to-year flexibility of +/-10% with a maximum of 2 years.
- Call for additional scientific research to improve the data set and the reliability of the assessment (in order to avoid massive fluctuations), including different components of the stock, population dynamics and management areas.
- Set up a working group of stakeholders and scientists as part of the Coastal States agreement to address the issue and protection of juvenile blue whiting.
- To discuss the dioxins and PCB issues at a future Working Group meeting.

North Sea Horse Mackerel (IIIa, IVbc, VIId).

- Maintain status quo of TAC until data issue is resolved.
- Set up a working group to improve research.
- Set up a working group to address the bycatch in horse mackerel fishery.
- Create correspondence between stock areas and management areas.

Southern Horse Mackerel (VIIIc and IXa)

- Advice is adopted without alterations. Southern Horse Mackerel to remain within the remit of the Pelagic RAC.

Western Horse Mackerel (II a, IVa,Vb, VIa,VIIa-c,e-k, VIIIa,b,d,e)

- Recommend a TAC for 2006 of 150,000 tonnes (137,000 tonnes in 2005). It was noted that the 2001 year class seems to be large and maybe similar to 1982 year class.
- Improve scientific advice (daily egg productivity in relation to fecundity).
- Set up working groups to:
 - o examine the utility of egg surveys.
 - o establish a recruitment index for horse mackerel (juvenile survey).
 - o address the bycatch in horse mackerel fishery.
 - o examine the possibilities and the timing for closures to protect juvenile horse mackerel.

Anchovies and Sardines

- It was decided that anchovies and sardines should be dealt with by the SWW RAC.
- If in the future the fisheries on anchovies or sardines in the Channel develop, the RACs will need to collaborate.

Sprat

- In the future Sprat will be included in Working Group 2 of the Pelagic RAC, but with lower priority than the other species.

Sustainable EU Fisheries / MSY

- Recommended that the Executive Committee write to the Commission that the document is important and that the Pelagic RAC needs more time to think about the way forward. A standpoint will be presented by the end of January.
- For a next Working Group meeting a number of experts will be invited to go through the proposals and present different alternatives.

Technical Measures

- Recommended that the Executive Committee write to the Commission seeking additional time to consider the proposals and indicating that the Pelagic RAC should be in a position to respond by the end of February 2006.
- A draft document will be prepared and circulated in advance of the next Working Group meeting by the secretariat.
- A detailed response will be formulated at the next Working Group meeting.

A number of recommendations have been taken on board by the Commission in its negotiations; other recommendations seem to not have had substantial impact on the final decisions on TACs and quotas.

Pelagic stock issues

On the 30th March 2006, the Pelagic RAC has, on its own initiative, sent a letter to the Commission on various outstanding scientific and management issues concerning the management of pelagic stocks. Requested was, amongst others, scientific research into the socio-economic consequences of the implementation of MSY. Furthermore there were issues about the review of reference points for certain stocks, suggestions for management plans, and clarification on certain issues. The Commission has replied to the various management and research issues, and that harvest rules for MSY will be developed in consultation with the relevant sector.

Toxins and dl-PCBs

At a Working Groups meeting on 14th February 2006 a presentation was given on the dioxin and dl-PCBs regulation in the blue whiting fishery. Subsequently, a letter was drafted by the Pelagic RAC with a request to assess the impact of the regulations on the blue whiting fishery. The Commission replied that it was, due to financial constraints, not able to carry out the proposed study. The issue was not resolved to the satisfaction of the Pelagic RAC and the Executive Committee has decided to draft a response to the EC.

Recommendations 21 June 2006

At a Working Groups meeting on 21st June 2006, recommendations were drafted concerning the ICES/ACFM advice and TACs and quota for 2007. As not on all stocks there was agreement (herring VI north and North Sea herring) the discussions and final drafting of recommendations were postponed to the next Working Groups meeting to be held on the 12th of September 2006.

North Sea Herring

During the Working Groups meeting on the 21st of June, no consensus was reached on the formulation of a recommendation for North Sea herring. The stock is healthy, but 4 subsequent years of low recruitment required measures to be taken. The ICES/AFM advice was a TAC reduction of 47%, which would have had an enormous impact on the industry, but was in line with the precautionary approach. The matter was complex and to deviate from the management plan (which includes a maximum reduction in TAC of 15%) needed careful consideration, especially as the causes for the decline in recruitment were not clear.

The matter was forwarded to the Executive Committee meeting on the 5th of July held in Brussels where new discussions took place and where it was concluded that different scenarios for a TAC reduction over a longer period, i.e. until 2010, would provide a better basis to make decisions on. Hence, the Pelagic RAC requested the Commission to ask ICES to study the reference points for the North Sea herring stock and to provide a number of scenarios based on different fishing mortality rates (F) presenting a longer-term perspective. This issue was taken further to the next Working Group meeting and hence second year in the existence of the Pelagic RAC.

Reports, letters, and recommendations

- Work Programme 2005/2006
- Action plan for NE Atlantic mackerel.
- Proposed changes to Pelagic Trawl Cod Ends Letter to EC (21/10/05)
- Recommendations Pelagic RAC on TACs and quota 2006. Letter to EC (25/11/05) with recommendations on ICES/ACFM advice on herring, mackerel, blue whiting and horse mackerel to take into consideration at TAC and quota negotiations.
- Working paper WG 1 on outcomes of TACs and Quota negotiations herring and mackerel.
- Working paper WG 2 on outcomes of TACs and Quota negotiations blue whiting and horse mackerel.
- Recommendations TACS and quota 2006. Letter to EC (25/11/05).
- Draft position paper MSY.
- Draft position paper Technical Measures.
- Inter-RAC position on Enforcement and Control.
- Outstanding issues pelagic stocks: Letter to EC (30/03/06) concerning various scientific and management issues concerning the various stocks covered by the Pelagic RAC.
- Position of Pelagic RAC on dioxin and dl-PCB regulation. Letter to EC (06/04/06) about the potential impact of the regulation on the fishing and processing of the blue whiting fishery.
- Input Pelagic RAC on MoU ICES. Letter to EC (26/04/06) with the views and comments of the Pelagic RAC to be included in the revised MoU.
- Inter-RAC position on cooperation with EFARO. Letter (25/05/06)
- Further studies / scenarios for North Sea Herring. Letter to EC (14/07/06)
- Request for direct access to ICES. Letter to EC (24/07/06)
- Expression of support for change in status RACs. Letter to EC (24/07/06)
- Expression of support for changes in consultation process. Letter to EC (10/08/06)
- Draft recommendations on TAC and quota 2007 (finalised in year 2)
- Draft recommendations on TAC and quota 2007 (finalised in year 2)
- Draft rules of procedure (finalised in year 2).

Communication

An important means to communicate results and provide information to the members is the website (www.pelagic-rac.org) which provides general information on the Pelagic RAC and its activities. All relevant documents are posted, including the agenda and minutes of the meetings, as well as the recommendations, action plans, and position papers. There is also room for news items.

The results achieved by the Pelagic RAC relevant to the sector are, insofar newsworthy, published in Newspapers such as Fishing News and Visserijnieuws (Dutch). This usually happens by making use of the communication services of the Fish Product Board (Productschap Vis). In the first year, there have been newspaper articles about the establishment of the Pelagic RAC: "New Pelagic RAC off the ground"¹ and on some of the successes booked, such as the adoption of proposed changes to pelagic trawl cod-ends in order to increase safety on board of vessels. This news item appeared also on the website of Fishupdate.com².

DEFRA published a leaflet about the RACs which is very useful in providing information on the Pelagic RAC.

The Pelagic RAC has been represented at the Glasgow Show on the 17th of May 2005 in a slot of John Coleman.

Finally, in June 2006, Visserijnieuws (the Dutch equivalent of Fishing News) published a special on Herring and Pelagic Fisheries in which Ingvild Harkes was interviewed about, amongst others, the Pelagic RAC. This increased the profile of the secretariat throughout the fishing industry as this magazine is widely read.

Collaboration with the Commission and other organisations

Collaboration with the Commission

From the viewpoint of the Pelagic RAC, the collaboration with the Commission has been highly satisfactory. The Commission has been very supportive in the establishment of the RACs and the persons appointed to deal with the RACs have been of great help. E-mail contact has been frequent and prompt and queries followed-up in a constructive way. The Coordination meetings have also been very insightful. Appreciated most, however, is the pro-activeness of the Commission, for instance in dealing with the budget issues and in the collaboration with ICES and provision to channel research needs through the Commission. In these cases in particular the Commission obviously had anticipated certain issues to arise and was able to promptly present a proposal to deal with the matter. This not only allows the Pelagic RAC to function well and carry out its objectives, it also stimulates the RAC as we feel heard and appreciated.

¹ <http://visserijnieuws.punt.nl/British%20Fishing%20News/>

² http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/4016/Pelagic__RAC_scores_early_success.html

Collaboration with other RACs

In order to deal with horizontal issues, to avoid overlap, and to support each other on administrative issues, the secretariats of the RACs that are operational (the NSRAC, the NWWRAC, the Baltic RAC and the Pelagic RAC) have had several informal Inter-RAC meetings. These meetings have been very useful in the establishment of other RACs by providing advice and examples such as rules of procedures or budgets. The Pelagic RAC has had a good example in the NSRAC which has been established a year earlier and the Pelagic RAC, in turn, helped other RACs that were in the process of establishing themselves. In the course of the first (Pelagic RAC, NWWRAC) and second year (NSRAC) of their existence, the RACs ran into difficulties around budgets and other administrative matters. After an Inter-RAC meeting during which a list of common problems and solutions was drafted, on the 24th of May a meeting was held with the Commission who, in response to our problems, proposed to change the status of the RACs to 'bodies pursuing an aim of general European interest' (Art 162 of IR) which would have great benefits for the RACs in terms of long-term sustained funding and simplification of procedures. The RACs very much welcomed this proposal which in the mean has been adopted.

Other issues that the RACs collaborated on were a position on Enforcement and Control and collaboration with ICES.

Collaboration with ICES

The RACs are not in the financial position to ask ICES to carry out specific types of research, nor can they claim scientific input on a structural basis. At Working Group meetings, however, it is very useful to have input from ICES scientists, for example when going through the ICES/ACFM advice. It is also important to have access to scientific data or models when discussing management of certain pelagic stocks. Therefore, a structured approach and a point of entry in ICES was required. To talk about these things and to formalise and structure the collaboration with ICES, a meeting was organised on 20-21 February 2006 at ICES headquarters in Copenhagen. The matter was further discussed at an inter-RAC meeting on March 22nd.

The meetings with ICES and EC representatives thus far have been very constructive and the foundations for collaboration have been laid. Furthermore, the Pelagic RAC has made use of the opportunity to present its views and comments on the (new) MoU between ICES and the EC. The new MoU provides, amongst others, the RACs with the possibility to channel research needs through ICES. The Pelagic RAC was very pleased to see most of its suggestions taken on board. One important issue, i.e. direct access to ICES with specific research requests, however, was not dealt with in a satisfactory way. In response the NWW RAC and Pelagic RAC sent a second letter and hopefully this issue will be resolved in the near future.

The presence of scientists at meetings or other scientific input so far has been granted on an ad-hoc basis and dependent on the merit of the national research institutes. In collaboration with the North Sea RAC, NWW RAC and the Baltic RAC another letter was drafted to ask for a formal cooperation with EFARO and presenting the estimated scientific requirements.

Positive is that the RACs have been invited to attend a number of meetings such as the ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) and ACFM meetings. We have

accepted the invitations to these meetings and were pleased to have representatives of the Pelagic RAC present.

Challenges

The timing of funds and reporting requirements have proven difficult as during the first 6 months, the day-to-day running of the Pelagic RAC and organisation of meetings took up a lot of time. With the strict regulations and procedures set by the EC, this caused the second instalment of the first half of the contribution to be rather late. It was also a problem that the major part of the budget (50%) would only become available after the final report and external audit, which caused the Pelagic RAC, as they have no organisation behind them to provide substantial loans, to not be able to spend the entire budget. All financial issues were brought up, in concordance with other RACs and by the end of 2006 the EC came forward with a proposal to change the status of the RACs as to ensure continuous funding and to change the distribution key of the funds over the year. This proposal was fully supported by the RACs.

In terms of staff, a total of 0,83 fte to run the secretariat proved too little. It was decided to have at least one full-time employee to run the secretariat assisted by an office manager. The budget was adapted in order to accommodate this. By the end of year 1, we had 1,15 fte.

Funding from external sources in the first year has been minimal. A contribution from the Scottish Executive was withdrawn after the Spanish administration objected to this. The Member States had planned to discuss when and in what way to support the RACs. However, there is no news on any decisions made on this subject. Most other RACs have been able to get support from their national administrations to provide seconded staff or office space. The Pelagic RAC will put more effort in trying to obtain similar support. It would, however, be preferable if support from member states would be coordinated and hence less ad-hoc.

During the first meeting of the Pelagic RAC it was decided to have English as a working language. At a later stage, however, requests came in from the Spanish government and French representatives to provide translation services. In order to establish good rapport and enable fruitful participation from those who are not able to work in English, the Pelagic RAC has decided to provide translation services and made budget changes accordingly.

Conclusions

Since its inauguration, the Pelagic RAC has developed itself into an active and functional organisation. Membership is widespread and structured according to the EC guidelines. Various meetings have been held with participants from 10 Member States, third countries, and international organisations. Translation has helped to increase the input and participation from France and Spain.

The Executive Committee and Working Groups have been productive in terms of decision-making and in the formulation of advice, recommendations and suggestions on management. Two successes are noteworthy, i.e. the solution for pelagic trawls cod-ends and the input of the Pelagic RAC in the development of an action plan for Mackerel. The RAC has also been successful in that suggestion for the new MoU between the Commission and ICES were taken on board as to facilitate collaboration.

The Pelagic RAC has been able to remain within the budget and the financial report and external audit have been submitted in time.

The RACs that are in place (North Sea RAC, North Western Waters RAC, and the Baltic Sea RAC) have organised themselves and coordinate their activities through so called Inter-RAC meetings. In dealing with administrative affairs and encountering difficulties in practical terms, suggestions were made towards the Commission which resulted in a proposal to 1) adapt the distribution key with which funding is transferred and 2) to change the status of the RACs into bodies of community interest which allows for more stable and continuous funding. The RACs have also played a vital role in identifying the need for changing the time-line for scientific advice as to allow better input of stakeholders in the process of decision-making on TACs and quota.

Collaboration with the Commission has been highly satisfactory. The Commission has been proactive in dealing with the difficulties encountered by the RACs and have been very willing to present solutions. Helpful in this are the bi-annual coordination meetings.

The objective of the RACs is stakeholder consultation and we think that the Pelagic RAC has been successful in this respect. Recommendations, including suggestions for long-term management, have been, to a degree, accepted and the members of the RAC feel they are influential in the process. All in all, the Pelagic RAC can look back on a productive first year. The challenges that have occurred thus far have been dealt with and we are looking forward to a next year in which we work further towards integrated and sustainable management of pelagic fisheries.