

Management Team Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 20 May 2021

Zoom online meeting

Attendees:

- Guus Pastoor, MAC Chair
- Christien Absil, MAC Vice-Chair
- Sean O'Donoghue, MAC Vice-Chair & WG1 Chair
- Pierre Commère, WG2 Chair
- Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General

Issues discussed:

1. Publication of documents on the MAC's website

- **Letter from the Regional Government of Galicia**

Secretary General explained that, usually, MAC advice and letters of reply from the European Commission and Member States are made publicly available on the website. In this case, there was an official letter from a regional government as a reaction to MAC advice. As determined by the CFP, advice is directed at the European Commission and the Member States. The Secretary General argued that, nevertheless, official reactions from regional governments should be made publicly available, since the CFP determines that representatives of regional administrations shall be allowed to participate in Advisory Council meetings as active observers, which demonstrates that regional administrations do have a specific status and a recognised relationship with the Advisory Councils.

WG1 Chair noted that it was an opportunity to review the publication of documents on the website. Advice adopted by the Executive Committee and official replies should be on the website. Minutes from Executive Committee, Working Group and Focus Group meetings should also be publicly available. Other documents should be under a members' area with login requirements.



MAC Vice-Chair stated that it should be clear when documents had not been approved by the MAC. It should be clear when documents are replies to MAC advice. For documents in the drafting stage, these should be available in a members' area.

WG2 Chair stated that there should be a difference between official reactions from the EU institutions and reactions from other entities. The difference should be clear.

MAC Chair highlighted that it was difficult to know whether there was a coordination of positions between the federal government and the regional governments. The MAC Chair suggested a creation of a new sub-section on the website for "reactions of third parties". Otherwise, the document could be included among other meeting documents in the page of the specific Executive Committee meeting.

WG1 Chair emphasised that correspondence from the Member States and the European Commission must be made publicly available. Potentially also correspondence from other parties. WG1 Chair suggested that draft guidelines could be put forward to the Executive Committee based on a proposal from the Secretariat. In this case, if the document is published, there could be problems with the federal government. If it is not published, there is a lack of transparency.

MAC Chair also emphasised that the difference between entities should be clear. MAC Chair agreed with the preparation of draft guidelines by the Secretariat to put forward to the Executive Committee.

2. Commission's proposal on the functioning of the Advisory Councils

- **Template document for the presentation of advice**

WG1 Chair expressed agreement with the use of a mandatory numbering system. Nevertheless, it is important to have flexibility in sections A, B, C, and D. There should not be a specific section for dissenting opinions, in order to not discourage efforts to reach consensus.

MAC Vice-Chair stated that the template was a helpful tool, but should not be too prescriptive. It should assist the Secretariats and the members in the work.

MAC Chair agreed that it is important to have flexibility. MAC Chair expressed concerns with the "contribution of the advice to the CFP objectives", since the horizontal ACs



need to be taken into account. The template should help the Commission make their expectations clear to the Advisory Councils.

WG2 Chair exemplified that the MAC discussed trade and sanitary matters.

WG1 Chair expressed surprised by the inclusion of a section dedicated to “description of the working methods used for advice development”.

Secretary General explained that the annual final report already includes descriptions on the working methods for the adoption of advice.

WG2 Chair suggested that there could be a reference to other concerned Commission services, such as DG TRADE and DG SANTE.

Management Team agreed that dissenting opinions should be in the content of the advice, appearing in context, instead of in a separate sub-section.

- **Criteria for the classification of members**

MAC Chair expressed doubts regarding criteria 1(c), since there are NGOs that might receive funding from undertaking active in commercial fields.

Secretary General stated that it would be rather difficult for the Secretariat to check the funding sources of members. There are also cases of organisations representing commercial interests, but that receive a significant amount of public funding.

WG1 Chair argued that the criteria should be mainly on the focus of the organisation, instead of the funding sources.

MAC Chair agreed that the main focus should be on the structure and governance. The funding should be secondary, and it could be difficult to assess. Every organisation applying for a seat in the Executive Committee should be analysed in a case-by-case basis, particularly if there are concerns regarding the appropriate classification.

3. Working Group 1

- **Marketing Standards**

WG1 Chair explained that the STECF report had been made publicly available. The working group should have a significant discussion on the report. The intention is to



develop a roadmap on the way forward, in order to have a draft for consideration at the September meeting. Members should read the report ahead of the meeting. If needed, another WG1 meeting dedicated to the topic could take place.

- **COVID-19 Pandemic**

Secretary General informed that DG MARE representatives would be present for the topic, but would not provide an update.

4. Working Group 2

- **Trade**

MAC Chair highlighted the importance of discussing the EEA Agreement. The issue is quite controversial, since the catching sector might seek more trade measures to retaliate against the lack of fishing opportunities.

WG1 Chair agreed that it would be useful to receive an update on the EEA Agreement.

Secretary General informed that there would be Commission representatives present to discuss trade with Cape Verde, the EEA Agreement, and trade with the USA.

- **Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs)**

Secretary General explained that the Commission's consultant expressed satisfaction with the MAC's Advice on the Roadmap. The consultant might contact the MAC at a later stage for further information.

- **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU)**

WG2 Chair highlighted that the draft advice on flags of convenience had been circulated. Contributions from AIPCE-CEP at the meeting were expected.

Secretary General informed that EJF expressed interest in the joint adoption of the advice with the LDAC.

- **Initial Focus Group on Trade**

Secretary General explained that the Focus Group held several meetings. DG MARE expressed interest in collaborating on the study. Further details are still pending from DG MARE.



WG2 Chair suggested the organisation of an informal meeting between the Focus Group members and DG MARE to discuss the study.

- **Other topics**

Secretary General informed that there was interest from NGOs members in the development of joint advice with LDAC and MEDAC on IUU fishing and the use of illegal driftnets by Morocco. The NSAC Secretariat expressed interest in the organisation of a joint workshop on new traceability technologies, such as blockchain, which would be followed up by advice.

5. Working Group 3

- **Voluntary Sustainability Claims**

Secretary General explained that there was agreement on most recommendations, with the exception of one. The working group still needed to reach agreement on the main text, particularly paragraphs describing differing views.

- **Plant-based imitation seafood**

Secretary General explained that, amongst WG3 members, there was support to have labelling requirements, but agreement was lacking on how the labelling should take place. The Secretary General suggested that the advice could recommend the development of labelling rules, but not mention specific solutions.

MAC Chair argued that it could be useful for the Commission to know the different views amongst stakeholders on labelling solutions.

- **Health and Environmental Value of Seafood**

Secretary General informed that there would be presentations by representatives of CONXEMAR, STECF, and FEDEPESCA about nutrition, environmental effects, and VAT levels. The aim is to inspire advice drafting by the working group. The advice should focus on how the Commission's policy can recognise the value of seafood.

MAC Vice-Chair recognised that the Commission's policy does not always appropriately cover seafood. The Farm to Fork Strategy tends to focus more on vegetables vs meat products. As for VAT levels, MAC Vice-Chair argued that it would



be too difficult to generalise it for seafood products, since the nutrition benefits vary amongst seafood products.

- **Other topics**

Secretary General informed that he had been invited by the AAC to speak about the MAC's advice on caviar labelling at the 2 June AAC WG1 meeting.

WG2 Chair suggested raising the issue of maximum levels of sulphite in Norway lobster as an AOB item.

