

## **REPORT of the Meeting: Inter-AC Secretariats – Commission**

**Participants: Advisory Council Secretariats, DG MARE**

**Date: 12 May 2022**

**Location: Webex**

**Chair: Valérie Tankink, DG MARE**

**Rapporteur: Marina Illuminati, Marzia Piron, MEDAC**

### **1. OPENING REMARKS**

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) welcomed participants to the third meeting between INTER-AC Secretariats and EC and stressed the importance of organising this kind of meeting regularly, she also thanked the MEDAC for the organisation. She presented the agenda and kicked off the meeting with the first point concerning the implementation of the Delegated Act.

### **2. FOLLOW-UP OF THE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE DELEGATED ACT**

Valerie Tankink asked all Secretariats about the state of play by each AC in the implementation of the new provisions of the EU Delegated Act 2022/207 and invited them to take the floor and present their current situation or share any issue.

Ewa Milewska (BSAC) informed that they have just had a GA and ExCom meetings and they elected a new Chair coming from the fisheries sector and a new Vice-Chair coming from the organisation EAA (European Anglers Association). The ExCom members also appointed a new Executive Secretary, Guillaume Carruel. Their own Rules of Procedures will be revised during the next ExCom meeting but in general they are in line with the new Delegated Act provisions in particular as far as the GA Art 5 and Art. 7 are concerned. She informed also that they carried out a performance review in 2020 so the next one is supposed to be done in 2025.

Rosa Caggiano (MEDAC) informed that they sent a letter to the EC to better understand how to amend their Internal Rules of procedure to comply with the new Delegated Act. She explained that MEDAC already has 5 Vice-Presidents (3 from the 60% and 2 from the 40%) to keep the representation well balanced but the elections are scheduled in July 2022, so an ExCom meeting will be organized at the end of May to transpose the new provisions into the Internal Rules of procedure, in particular articles concerning the membership fees, the elections by consensus and the performance review.

Alexandre Rodriguez, (LDAC) thanked the EC as the Delegated Act was helpful and some issues have been clarified. In particular he informed that under Art. 4, 2 member organisations pending of classification (i.e., GTA and TUPA) have been classified easily as “fishing sector”. Furthermore, as a result of the internal review they spotted one member organisation (IPLNF) which was classified as “fishing sector” in the LDAC and “other interest group” in the CCRUP. This has been now solved and there are no discrepancies anymore. He explained also that, in accordance with the new provision of the Delegated Act which invites ACs to ensure members participation using also IT tools, and due to the hybrid nature of the forthcoming Annual General Assembly meeting, a virtual electronic vote for both the positions (Chair and Vice Chairs) and membership of the Executive Committee has been called for via Zoom. The voting process will be anonymous and results will be publicly published and presented immediately after the voting.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) informed they had no significant changes in the Internal Rules as they are in line with the new provisions. He also explained that they concluded a performance review two months ago and that they sent the report to the EC. He asked the EC if they will receive some feedback from them or if they should be involved in any follow-up.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) stated that they already had a balanced composition of the Presidency even before the Delegated Act. Their Rules of Procedures which were approved last year also took into consideration some aspects. She shared her doubts about the performance review costs and her issues about the new provisions for the classification of members, as an evaluation of all members is needed in order to avoid any discrimination. She felt it is a long and complicated procedure and so she asked for any suggestions for the best approach. She also commented that maybe Chairs should attend this kind of meeting when relevant financial matters, such as lump sum, are treated, so that questions or doubts can be directly raised up.

Anne Marie Kats, (PELAC) commented that they are on track complying with the Delegated Act new rules even before if came into force. Their Rules of Procedure have been revised last October during the GA meeting, initially due to Brexit but actually they took on board mainly all these new rules and she thanked NWWAC for the help. As for the balanced representation, now NGOs have a formal role too. Moreover, she informed that a Performance Review was carried out in 2021 and the results were positive.

Tamara Talevska (NSAC) informed that they amended the Rules of Procedures after Brexit in 2020 and they are in line with the new Delegated Act provisions. They are currently discussing with one NGO representative to cover one of the two Vice-Chair position. Concerning the categorisation of members, she presented their new proposal for letter of commitment which includes the set of categories of members provided for in the Delegated Act. This will put the onus on the members to identify with specific category based on unambiguous criteria. The Secretariat will then take the right to verify statements by reviewing underlying documentation (financial statements, statutes etc.). Finally, the annual General Assembly will approve categorisations and the membership annually. She also pointed out that, even if under the Delegated Act the advice needs to comply with the CPF, their members would like to be able to flag any important issues outside of the CPF, if needed. She asked the EC when they are supposed to undergo a new Performance Review, as they did one internally in 2021 by compiling questionnaire of 80 questions, complying with the principles of anonymity, objectivity, open access to results and reproducibility/comparability of results. As for the transparency rules, she stated that minority statements are included as per internal RoP if and when needed in their advice and that they will provide hybrid option to attend their meetings in the future to ensure full participation, but they appreciate also the LDAC approach, with the idea of encouraging more active participants to join in person and less active ones to join as observers online.

Daniela Costa (CCRUP) echoed LDAC saying that there was a member of both ACs which is now classified in the same category following the new provisions. As for the Rules of Procedures, she explained that no amendments are provided for now.

Mihaela Mirea (BLSAC) informed they have already had new elections and it was decided to postpone the election of the Vice-Chairs in order to decide better the requirements under the new Delegated Act. They will put the new criteria for the classification of members in the future amendment. Regarding the Performance review they will start the procedure this Autumn.

Cécile Fouquet (AAC) commented that they have had problems in the past with the classification of members but not anymore. They will review one by one the members and they will check if everyone is in the correct category. The performance review is not provided in this year.

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) answered to the NSAC question about the performance review, recalling the fact that it should be independent and that they need to do it in the next 5 years. In terms of the application of the Delegated Act, she invites everyone to share any questions, doubts and positive experiences, which can be helpful. She also answered to MAC question about the performance review, stating that it is an AC internal business, the EC will look into the reports and the actions, but the only important thing for them is transparency and internal follow-up for the ACs.

Cécile Fouquet (AAC) pointed out also that it would be important to have a common approach with common elements for the performance reviews in order to be able to compare different ACs.

Alexandre Rodriguez, (LDAC) shared his experience as first AC proposing this idea under its own initiative in an Inter AC policy meeting with DG MARE back in 2017. He explained that he first proposed that DG MARE would undergo regularly performance reviews, but the reason was not to rank the ACs but to allow sharing information about how the ACs are performing with a common methodology and indicators which makes easier the comparison. In view of this, he supports AAC's proposal of having a common set of criteria and suggest to wait until the first round of PR is completed amongst all the ACs to be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of each independent review and build a common methodology for the second generation of PR.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) thought that the idea of having common criteria could be useful, but he asked for flexibility. He explained they used the same consultant used by LDAC, as such the reports should be comparable. He expressed availability to share the Terms of Reference with other colleagues.

Tamara Talevska (NSAC), agreed with the AAC and believed that a standardized approach would be better suited so the results can be compared. In the next stage, she proposed to find common denominators and jointly agreed terms of reference and perhaps even a shared consultant.

Cécile Fouquet (AAC) clarified that of course we need to keep the specificity of each AC but we have common elements to be analysed and it would be very useful.

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) stated that it is interesting point and that maybe in the future something can be done about it. She also announced that the Study on Regionalisation will be published very soon and they will discuss about it .

### 3. PLANNING OF MEETINGS

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) reminded that InterACs meetings became more regularly, and that this kind of meetings have not the same logics as the other InterAC meeting with Chairs. She understood what Mo said, as the financial matters are usually discussed in these meetings with Secretariats, which are more informal, but she thought it won't be a good idea to have a third type of meeting. So maybe the solution could be to put also some important financial matters in the InterAC meeting with Chairs trying to balance technical info. She also reminded of the problem of languages, as for the InterAC meeting with Chairs interpreters are needed, as not all Chairs are comfortable with the English language. Concerning the physical meetings, she announced that maybe the EC will organize a hybrid meeting in autumn and she asked the Secretariats if they agreed or if they preferred a completely virtual meeting.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) believed that the Executive Secretary has sufficient autonomy to attend these meetings, which focus on administrative and financial matters, without the Chairs. The more informal character of the meetings also has an added value. He welcomed the increased number of meetings with the EC, while noting that it was also important to avoid scheduling too many. In terms of physical or hybrid, he reminded that they are based in Brussels, so it is easy for them to attend.

Tamara Talevska (NSAC) welcomed the increase number of meeting but believed that three time a year for the Secretariats meetings and twice a year for the INTERC AC with Chairs would suffice. She also stated that she would prefer to attend physically, when possible.

Alexandre Rodriguez, (LDAC) as for the participation of the Chair, he explained that the Chair maybe can be involved on a voluntary basis whenever there are topics that justify their attendance. About the InterAC meetings, he commented that it is good to have the detailed minutes of the meetings in writing. Perhaps it would be good to combine the virtual and hybrid meetings for the Inter AC with Secretariats, while facilitating

in person meetings once/twice a year with the Chairs in preparation for Inter AC policy meetings with DG MARE. To this effect, it would be positive trying to schedule such meetings in the same week of other MARE policy events taking place in Brussels to increase attractiveness and interest in promoting attendance in person.

Daniela Costa (CCRUP) explained that her Chair is Spanish and he will always need translation, so these could cause some inequality among ACs if the attendance of Chairs is required also for this kind of meeting. About meetings in person, once in a while, it is good to meet, and she proposed (an idea that came from a conversation between her and Mo Mathies) that meetings could be organized in the different headquarters of the ACs.

Matilde Vallerani (NWWAC) supported LDAC appreciation of INTER-AC meetings' reports which are extensive and useful. She confirmed that the NWWAC would like to have meetings in person again and that, once a year could be a good compromise, possibly in concomitance with other events of interest.

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) explained that they have big constraints about meetings organisation and travel expenses, so they have to make different choices but she loved the idea of CCRUP organizing meetings in different ACs headquarters. She also proposed to keep these two different kinds of meetings (INTER-AC Secretariats and INTERACs) but at the same time, when it comes to financial matters, she can put them in the INTERAC meeting as well. She informed that at the end of June, 28<sup>th</sup> June as tentative date, there is a meeting planned, but they are not sure to confirm it and that she would like to organize a physical meeting this autumn but it will depend on budget availability.

Daniela Costa (CCRUP) remembered the EC that on 28th June, some of the ACs Secretariats will be in Lisbon for the UN Oceans Conference.

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) concerning the participation of EC representatives during the ACs meetings, explained that Mr. Sadauskas Kestutis, the new Deputy Director general will attend most of the ACs meetings to which he has been invited. Charlina Vietcheva is also keen to attend as well as Lena Andersson Pench. Depending on travel budget, in terms of EC participation, they welcomed hybrid facilities.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) in terms of personal attendance, explained that even if they are in Brussels, in March, most of the EC representatives attended online. In May, they sent the request very late, but he welcomed the fact that now they get faster reply than before, and he thanked MARE A4 for the coordination.

Anne-Marie Kats (PELAC) stated that EC attendance is very high and very knowledgeable on the matters, they appreciate it very much. They have been discussing internally on how to organize meeting and she commented that hybrid experience was very expensive and moreover hybrid meeting discourages members to attend. That's why they decided to organize in person meetings, but they will allow online connections just for speakers such as from the EC or ICES representatives.

Rosa Caggiano (MEDAC) explained that they will organize the ExCom meeting online but in July the renewal of the President and the ExCom members will be organised physically. Their members are keen to meet physically again but at the same time she supported the proposal of PELAC to allow some speakers to participate online, even if she pointed-out the issue of interpretation taking into consideration that the MEDAC has 6 working languages. She stated that the idea is to organize physical meetings till the end of the year. As for the EC participation in meetings, it has always been very high and much appreciated.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) explained they are organizing physical meetings in July and they will encourage members to participate in person. The NWWAC holds three plenary sessions a year and the Secretariat will propose to have the 3<sup>rd</sup> one virtual. She also commented that they had always experienced a great participation from the EC over the last years and they are very grateful for the collaboration with DG MARE as well as with DG ENV.

Daniela Costa (CCRUP) cannot complain about the participation of the EC except for the IUU Working Group, but as for the hybrid meetings, they organized a hybrid meeting in March in Madrid and even people living in Madrid did not come, so she underlined the fact that even if expenses of the hybrid system were higher and reimbursements costs were lower, these kind of meetings don't allow an effective debate.

Cécile Fouquet (AAC) explained that they decided to organize full presence or full virtual meetings. Some experts will give some presentations and they set up an artisanal method to make them interact with the room. During the Q&A time the Secretariats will translate the members' questions to the speakers if they don't understand their language. She asked if in general the cost of savings for travels will compensate the cost of a hybrid organisation.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) told that they had two hybrids' meetings and they were good, but the majority of members chose to participate online. He pointed out that for a hybrid meeting, the difficulty is to book the venue as you never know how many people will come.

Mihaela Mirea (BLSAC) agreed with Rosa those physical meetings are very important, as members want to dialogue in informal moments, like coffee-breaks or lunches in person but she believed that there are some experts, speakers who are still preferring the online meetings. Moreover, she stated that people will travel only if they feel safe to do it. They will organize hybrid meetings in the future to give the chance to attend to everyone.

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) concluded this point, stating that considering the restrictions in terms of budget, if there is the possibility to connect in hybrid meetings, the EC will be there. but they will try also to participate in person if they can. She explained also that it's up to each AC to decide the best way to go on in the organisation of meetings, but of course they will not go back to what was the situation before the covid-19 crisis.

#### 4. LUMP-SUMS AND FINANCIAL POINTS

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) remarked that a lot of questions have been already replied in detail after the previous meeting with the ACs Secretariats. In this occasion some more in-depth information has been provided especially on methodological aspects. Unlike the previous meeting, this time the amounts of the lump-sums were defined.

Rumjana Georgieva, DG MARE-Unit 1, presented the status and the novelties related to the new method of funding through the lump sums (attached ppt) in its current phase of implementation. Nothing has been changed in the idea, concept, and design compared to the previous meeting. The LDAC is the first AC trying the lump sums procedure, because it starts the financial year on first of June, and it is about to sign. Lot of exchanges of information, documents, explanations occurred on the new templates for the specific agreement and the grant agreement. Then, the PELAC will be the next one. Therefore, these two ACs already have seen the new legal text of the grant agreement with the new template required by the EU Central financial service. The main changes in grant agreements are few. The FPA will be signed with each AC as in the past: there are not many contents in this document, it is mainly referred to the willing of collaboration renewed every 4 years. Therefore, the details are provided in the Grant Agreement: the final grant amount agreed with the EC and some provisions when the deliverables are not as expected, as for the work program annexed to the document. The financial guarantee for the EC in relation to the work plans provides that, in case of 50% of implementation of recommendations and meetings, the lump sums payment will be reduced to 50% of the agreed amount. This never happened before, so it would be very exceptional. A precautionary measure defending the interest of the EC is reported in the art.22.3.4 concerning the reduction the annual lump-sum grant up to 30% when one or more of the basic requirements listed in the CFP Regulation have not been met. Due to EC administrative terminology, one annual grant corresponds to one single work package. MARE D1 and D3 agreed that only one deliverable should be the best solution, defined by the meetings and

recommendations (advice). Therefore, at least the 50% of work program implementation will be more measurable and it will allow the full payment of the agreed amount of the lump sum. Special attention must be paid to determine the amount of the lump sum before the grant agreement: to be sure about a common understanding on the lump sums agreed and based on the ACs inputs sent to EC. After this informal agreement, where the amount is determined, the EC will send a more formal email informing the AC about the amount, that will enter in the grant agreement. So, the only binding moment of this process on the amount definition is the signature of the grant agreement.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) thanked the ACs because they already sent the documents required with the estimation of the expenses. Then, the official letters sent by DG MARE will contain the formats and the amounts based on the information provided by the ACs in January. The ACs are invited to send any new relevant information to understand any needed variation on the amount agreed so far by both parties. So, the final agreed amount will be reported in the application such as the work plan. The following administrative steps are the same as before, although the new procedure should be faster than the previous one to avoid delay in payments and overlapping on the duration periods where there are no signed agreements. LDAC and PELAC are the first ones. Then, the 1<sup>st</sup> of October the NWWAC and the MAC, in November the AAC and the NSAC. The next year all the rest. Therefore, all the ACs should finish this year with the old financial system. For CCRUP it has been agreed that it will be used the cost-based methodology one more year because there are not so many data on costs to start with the lump sums.

Alexandre Rodriguez (LDAC) commented that the main constraints have been solved and the answers were clear and reasonable. The most difficult part has been to agree the EU grant amount allotted, but finally they found a compromise on the FPA. He summarized his positive experience in the process so far, with DG MARE financial team facilitating the transition. In the coming days they will send the grant application with the new format and templates duly fulfilled. As first question, he asked for more information about the concept of indexation (it is the same as price inflation?) indicated in the letter and applied to the amount. The second one is related to the receipts of the income received by the contributors, such as Spain. With the new system of the lump sums, he would prefer to send all receipts and proof of payments/commitment at the end of the financial period. As a last point, he asked for more information on how to reflect in quantitative terms the number of recommendations (i.e., pieces of advice) in the work programme according to the new annex doc 5 and if they need to be cautious given that it is difficult to forecast the number of recommendations adopted for the year and indeed it can vary remarkably from one year to another (the average number being between 9-14 for the LDAC).

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) clarified that in the template there is the request of the planned recommendations (advice) and meetings. She highlighted that 50% is a quite large range for the estimation of recommendations (advice) and meetings, and she suggested being realistic in relation to the available knowledge in the moment in which the work programme form is fulfilled, considering the work done in the last years and the coming priorities. In case of a significant reduction in the expected number of recommendations at the end of the year or mismatch between what has been promised and delivered, the EC will ask for some clarifications. In any case, once the lump sums have been approved, they will not ask for any additional receipts or proofs of income later on.

Referring to the question on receipts, Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) explained that the lump sum is set on the basis of results planned for the year. The AC is entitled of the amount as long as the key deliverable is achieved. It is not due to cover the costs anymore but assess results. In the case of LDAC, the amount is based on the historical information on the contribution and other incomes received so far. If there are some doubts about the possible evolution of expenses/income in a year, the Commission will ask for more information and justifications of the difference with the previous years. About indexation, 2022 is a very particular year: the reference was usually 2% for MARE services, because the European Commission budget 2021-2017 was based on this percentage, although in this period it is going up every month and, on the other hand, it was

overestimated in 2021 (1%). Indexation in this period is not predictable and the same problem had to be addressed considering the different month of the beginning of the ACs financial year. In view of this, it was decided that the reference for all ACs will be Eurostat data for the same period (from January Year X-1 to January Year X) and that percentage will be applied to all the signed contracts within that year. This has been decided to apply equal treatments for all the ACs and avoid big unexpected fluctuations. The choice of the EC was towards a method that ensure a positive effect when inflation is high.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) asked to receive the templates, since, in July, MAC starts the new method. He also asked for more information on how the indexation would work across the four years period.

Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) replied that the letter will be sent in these days and that the amount will be based on the average historical costs plus that indexation. For the next year, if there will be an "x" amount to be agreed, it will be the amount "x" plus indexation.

Anne-Marie Kats (PELAC) was facing some difficulties in the estimation of the number of recommendations one year in advance because in the PELAC there are very clear objectives for each FG and WG, but sometime the outcomes are not recommendations.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) explained that the format of the template is as simplest as possible by also giving flexibility in the sections. It is also possible to explain that some topics are addressed in one or more years and that the recommendation will follow. It is important only to have an idea to avoid the falling in less of the 50%. In case of doubts in writing the text in the template, it is possible to call Dobrinka Dimova or Pascale Colson to ask for further information, just to understand if the ACs are in the correct direction. The advice is just to take what the ACs already have when the Secretariat is writing the document.

Then, Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) answered to Matilde Vallerani, NWWAC, about the CFP requirements to be reached by each AC to receive the grant: this information is reported in the Annex 3 part 2 of CFP on the functioning and funding of the ACs.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) assured that the new template of the work-program and the application will be sent in advance to have enough time for clarifications.

Marina Illuminati (MEDAC) asked about the need to send an additional template at the end of the year. Furthermore, some clarifications request was about the auditor's involvement and, finally, on the timing of the grant agreement signature.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) clarified that an equal template on the implemented actions will be required in a similar manner to the application form to receive the last part of the lump sums. However, the process should be quicker than before.

Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) asked if the MEDAC starts its financial year on the first of January and if it is signed only in February. Then, in principle the grant agreement should be signed before the start of its implementation. To do the correct procedure the MEDAC application should be sent early in advance, such as the beginning of November. The problem is specific for the MEDAC and BISAC.

Camille Gallouze (DG MARE) reassured that the lump sums process will be quicker to process for DG MARE financial services for sure.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) clarified that the crucial problem is that DG MARE can't sign an agreement before the commitment is done: this is the budgetary rule of the EC.

Marina Illuminati (MEDAC) explained that the MEDAC ExCom meeting is held in November, so the application is sent by the end of the month. And Rumjana Georgieva highlighted the need to send it by the first of November in order to assure the payment before the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) stressed the fact that no more activities are carried out in DG MARE after 20 of December. Therefore, all the documentation for payment must be ready before.

Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) clarified also that DG MARE doesn't need any auditor's document justifying the costs and receipt because no more costs claim is needed. The ACs must be compliant only with the national requirements and taxation. The eligibility of the costs is not looked by DG MARE after the implementation.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) asked for the timing of NWWAC because they send the application just before the summer-break. She queried whether the application should be sent in June or better July to receive the funds in time for their beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) explained that there is not restriction about the time when EC receives the documentation. So, the best solution is to send as soon as it is available.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) specified that the problem is that they have the General Assembly at the beginning of July for the approval of the budget.

Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) answered that the technical approval of the application should happen at the beginning of September to have the grant agreement signed by the end of the month. Her advice is to push the General Assembly's approval earlier in June to give to the EC more than 20 working days for the application.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) confirmed to Mo Mathies that the number of the planned consultation and meetings is not affecting the lump sum.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) stressed the unpredictability of the number of advice submissions in the following year.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) explained that EC was very in doubt about this new system because of this. It has been decided to simplify the procedures through the system of the lump sum avoiding the need to check each single invoice of each AC. Therefore, EC is basing this new system on the historical statistics of meetings and recommendations but considering an error in the estimation by 50%. These are the most measurable elements to be checked and the best way of improving the timing needed to provide the grant.

Mo Mathies (NWWAC) asked for further information in case of missed delivery of some consultations on specific topics planned in the workplan.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) answered that the topic of the consultation is not important: the reduction of the agreed amount of the lump sum can occur only in case of the achievement of less than 50% of the planned recommendations. It will be possible to explain why some of the planned recommendations were not delivered. She highlighted that this explanation and the threshold of 50% is due to the need of demonstrating the functioning of the lump sums in case of an audit inside to the EC as Commission service, although the ACs will not be audited any longer. The first month it is quite an investment in understanding the new method of lump sums, but after it will be very easy, and a lot of administrative burden will be avoided. The letters and the templates will be sent as soon as possible.

Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) said that the previous guidelines will be revised and will be provided very soon because the eligibility concept and the final payment are eliminated. She provided also some more information on the costs: it is important to be sure that it is possible to cover the salaries and the travel costs need to be reduced. In fact, DG MARE received the message from the Central Commission Services reporting that their travel costs should be reduced of 50% by January 2024.

Alexandre Rodriguez (LDAC) had a question about the current financial year budget because the LDAC has to change its office location due to lease expire and the costs of moving the office could be covered by their surplus resulting from this year, moving unspent amount related to members travels for meetings. However,

there is not any clear category or item for reflecting this costs, so he suggests to create perhaps a new category under item “D. Operating Costs”, splitting into two sub-items: D1.1. Rental of Office space: and a new sub-item D1.2. Other expenses associated to the office space (e.g., moving costs, paper destruction...). His question is if this proposal would be acceptable and the cost considered eligible for DG MARE; and, in that case, under which budgetary item they think they can include this expense.

Rumjana Georgieva (DG MARE) answered that this seems prima facie to be an eligible cost and it can be included in the final costs claim of the current financial year, whenever is duly justified and it falls under the item “operating costs”.

## 5. AOB AND CLOSING REMARKS

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) said that about AOB there is not much to say. DG MARE is trying to get the study on regionalization published: the link will be sent as soon as it is the case. Moreover, the EC is continuing to deepen the reflections following the replies to the stakeholders’ consultation on CFP and the program of the event planned on 10 June is more or less stabilized. It will be shared as soon as it will be ready and Valérie Tankink invited all ACs to attend the event in person or online. About the next planned meeting, the answers collected by doodle will be shared with all.

Pedro Reis Santos (MAC) reminded to all the point about ACs’ website.

Dobrinka Dimova (DG MARE) explained that Pascale Colson just wanted to remind to the ACs to make easier to understand the number and percentage of the members in terms of 60 and 40%. The aim is to know the number of the seats already occupied and those that are free.

Valérie Tankink (DG MARE) listed the key deliverables up to the EC and open with the PECH: works ongoing on the measures following the Ukraine crisis, the EMFAF etc. Of interest to ACs is the Action Plan: the EC office is looking at the feedback of the stakeholders’ consultation and they had also a meeting with the European Bottom Fishing Alliance alliance. The plan should be adopted before the summer, but there is some delay. While it is sure that the EC Communication on fishing opportunities will be adopted just in time for the June Fisheries Council meeting.

Valérie Tankink thanked the MEDAC for the organization. The date of the next meeting will be decided when Pascale Colson will come back. No more interventions were asked by participants, therefore Valérie Tankink closed the works of the Inter-AC.