

Facilitating Governance of Baltic Seas Fisheries by Improving Communication Among Stakeholders

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Summary

This project was designed to improve communication among stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council (BS RAC) and its partner organizations as a means to improve effective governance of the Baltic Sea Fisheries in a sustainable manner. The research included focused observation of meetings and procedures and in-depth interviews with members of the BS RAC, ICES (International Council on Exploration of the Seas) and Member States' agency scientists, NGO (non-governmental organization) representatives, and European Commission staff.

The results show that due to the complexity of the issues and the diversity of the BS RAC members, finding consensus is difficult for reasons that include distrust among the stakeholders and different levels of participation, communicative skills and approaches to consensus building. In addition, the level of understanding and clarity of communication of science among stakeholders has a major impact on the RAC discussions. Different understandings of scientific concepts and language, lack of trust in scientific assessments, and discrepancies between scientific data and local knowledge were identified as significant barriers to a productive dialogue process leading to consensus among the stakeholders.

The research shows that a conscious and reflective effort to improve the consensus development, including designed dialogue techniques, transparent and understandable science communication within the RAC itself, as well as improved feedback loops with the Commission and RAC members' constituency will help improve the effectiveness and impact of the RAC.

Based on these findings, the second part of the project developed interventions to promote the formation of informed consensus through joint fact-finding and discussions facilitated by informed and skilful mediators. In close collaboration with the BS RAC members, gcPLUS organised a science workshop to introduce the methods and rationale for mediated dialogues on strongly contested science-related issues.

Since the need for facilitated discussions appeared to be especially high among the new EU member states, gcPLUS also encouraged, organised and mediated a consensus dialogue process - the "Polish Roundtable Forum for Fisheries" - between fishermen, environmentalists, scientists and governmental representatives in Poland. This ongoing initiative is designed to overcome the highly fragmented organisational structure of fisheries in Poland and help the stakeholders to find common positions on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2012. This will also improve the ability of Polish members to contribute effectively to the discussions in the BS RAC and therefore to the better and more equitable participatory functioning of the BS RAC.

Background

This project was designed to improve communication among stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council (BS RAC) and its partner organizations as a means to improve effective governance of the Baltic Sea Fisheries in a sustainable manner.

Funds needed to conduct this project were generously provided by the Baltic Sea 2020 Foundation, the Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, and the European Commission, through the European Fisheries Fund.

The BS RAC was established by the European Commission in 2006 to provide advice to the Commission on behalf of the fisheries sector and other interest groups in the Baltic Sea. The RAC was conceived of as a forum to work out positions that could be reported as advice to the Commission. A single consensus statement to the Commission in behalf of the RAC is clearly preferable to multiple inputs from diverse groups.

The decision to form a RAC for the Baltic Sea (as well as six other RACs) and its composition reflects the Commission's efforts to develop stronger and broader stakeholder participation in decision making. The BS RAC members must consider scientific data on the status and prognosis of the fish stocks in their deliberations. The data that the RAC considers is collected, organized, and interpreted by scientists from the International Council on Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and national research agencies of the Member States in the Baltic region. The diversity of interest groups and of national, cultural, linguistic, and professional backgrounds among members of the BS RAC makes communication often unclear and development of consensus quite difficult.

In order to develop appropriate strategies and methods to improve the process of dialogue and consensus formation, the project first focused on understanding the dynamic situation in and around the RAC. This included observing and probing the knowledge, attitudes, and approach taken by RAC members and principal actors around the RAC. The research group examined formal and local knowledge, social learning, and communication and understanding of science. The questions that guided the research in the project are the following:

- How is scientific knowledge relevant to the Baltic RAC members produced, communicated, understood, and used?
- What role does "local knowledge" play *vis-à-vis* formal knowledge used by the scientists in establishing the scientific basis for decisions?
- Does misunderstanding or miscommunication of science significantly hinder effective governance within the BS RAC?
- How are national differences in attitude toward science and science-based policy reflected in discourse and conflicts?
- Does the participatory process of the BS RAC substantially influence fisheries governance on a national or EU level?
- What effect does stakeholder participation in the BS RAC have on social learning and improving understanding of fisheries issues on the community level?

The interventions outlined below arose from the research team's understanding gained through the exploration of these questions as the frame for the issues, process, and personalities in and around the BS RAC. The research process also was essential in the process of building trust with members of the RAC and related groups, which was essential in the interventions.

Method

The activities undertaken in the research phase of the project can be divided into four main categories:

- Interviews
- Observations of BS RAC meetings
- Literature reviews and analysis
- Informational conferences and workshops

Interviews

In addition to personal communications and conversations, interviews formed the main source of information in the research phase of the project. Members of the Executive Committee of the BS RAC and its working groups were interviewed. A letter to all members introducing the project and requesting an interview time was sent, which included 12 framing questions in order to give the participants the opportunity to prepare their thoughts, and also to clarify the purpose of the project and interview.

For several RAC members it was particularly important to be clear that the project was not an evaluation of the RAC. The point was made on several occasions that this project was intended to support the work of the RAC and closely associated agencies by finding ways to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. The trust in the research team and project that evolved, plus the apparent desire to make the work of the RAC more significant, was evident in the candor and range of answers that were offered in interviews.

Questions

The questions in the interviews covered the following topics:

- Background and connection to the Baltic fisheries, RAC involvement and activity in working groups
- Perception of the BS RAC's primary tasks and opportunities
- Obstacles to the work of the BS RAC
- Cooperation of the RAC and the European Commission and ICES
- Individuals interests and perceptions of other stakeholder's interests to be involved in the BS RAC
- Individual perceptions of the working process and outcomes of the BS RAC so far
- Suggestions about what could be improved

In the interviews the questions were used as a basic frame with room for narratives and expression of the interviewees' own concerns and perceptions of relevant matters. The open character of the interview and the supportiveness of the RAC members added substantially to our understanding of the different perspectives and ideas of the RAC members.

Second round of interviews

In order to further develop important outcomes and ideas, a second round of in-depth interviews including people outside the RAC itself, e.g. European Commission and ICES representatives and

fishermen not in the RAC was conducted. We also followed up on the invitations from several BS RAC members to visit harbours and fishing communities in different countries. The purpose was to better understand how constituents and institutional actors view the RAC. The results contributed to the planning and design for mediation in the second stage of the project.

Observations of RAC Meetings

The gcPLUS team participated as observers in several RAC and RAC related meetings from 2007 and onwards. Through the observations, a better understanding of fisheries related issues and of the actual process in the RAC was gained. At the same time, the participation provided opportunities to establish relationships and trust for the next stages of the project. Contacts were established with RAC members and other experienced researchers from various disciplines and perspectives.

The focus of the observations being a better understanding of the actual process of RAC in discussing more and less controversial topics and how the topics are handled by the working groups, the Executive Committee and the General Assembly at different stages of the consensus building process.

The participation in the meetings was also used for informal talks with the BS RAC members and other people involved. This provided inside information and built trust for later cooperation. It also provided an opportunity for productive discussions and led to several invitations to visit harbours and fishing communities.

BS RAC meetings in which one or more members of the gcPLUS team participated:

28 February 2007	Annual general assembly and Executive Committee meetings in Stockholm, Sweden
1 May 2007	Executive committee in Stockholm, Sweden
15 -16 January 2008	Workshop on Rights-based management and discussion on long-term priorities of the BS RAC in Copenhagen, Denmark
16 January 2008	Executive Committee in Copenhagen, Denmark
29 -30 January 2008	MIRAC meeting in Vigo, Spain
28 February 2008	General Assembly in Berlin, Germany
29 February 2008	Executive Committee in Berlin, Germany
30 April 2008	Demersal working group in Copenhagen, Denmark
3-4 June 2008	Joint Demersal, Pelagic and Salmon/Sea trout WG, Hamburg, Germany
17 June 2008	Executive Committee in Riga, Latvia
20 November 2008	Executive Committee in Copenhagen, Denmark
6-7 May 2009	BS RAC Science Workshop in Gdynia, Poland
8 May 2009	General Assembly in Gdynia, Poland

Informational Conferences and Workshops

We participated in a number of fisheries-related workshops organized by external research groups:

19-20 April 2007	Baltic Fisheries Research in Vilnius, Lithuania
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10-11 December 2007	SAFMAMS Workshop in Marine Environmental Management in Gothenburg, Sweden
06-08 March 2008	SAFMAMS Workshop in Marine Environmental Management in Tjärnö, Sweden
03-04 April 2008	Workshop on Baltic resource management in Helsinki, Finland
10 April 2008	Workshop on Forskning om kust och hav in Gothenburg, Sweden
13-15 October 2008	Working Group on Fisheries Systems (WGFS) Workshop on Uncertainty and Policy (WSUP): Fisheries in Dialogue with other Sectors in Copenhagen, Denmark
6-8 November 2008	Conference “Knowledge, Science and Global Commons” in Dresden, Germany

These workshops not only improved our understanding of fisheries related issues, but also helped in establishing contacts with other experienced researchers from various disciplines and perspectives.

Literature review and analysis

The literature review offered information about the extensive research and significant number of projects with regard to fisheries management and the role of the scientific advice. A comparison with other “governance of the commons” issues was made to identify useful similarities, as well as characteristics distinguishing the fisheries context from other cases. In addition, documents of the working process of the BS RAC were analysed, including the outcomes of the different working groups, and how these results are handled by the BS RAC Executive Committee and General Assembly and finally by the European Commission. This analysis provided further insights about the efficacy and usefulness of the RAC process. The results of the literature review and analysis is contained in the section below on results and conclusions.

Results from interviews and observations

This is a summary of the key points emerging from interviews with the members of the BS RAC.

Aim and purpose of the BS RAC

Most interviewees were very positive to the idea of the BS RAC; they support the aims for which it was established. They see the RAC as an opportunity to be heard - as a forum for productive discussions with different parties, which cannot be found elsewhere. However, the specific value of the RAC to individual members differs significantly.

Even though the interviewees see the opportunities the RAC provides in principle, they are aware of the gap between principle and practice. The gap is made evident by their comments on the difficulties in reaching consensus, finding common bases for understanding and effective compromise.

Examples of comments on this issue are the following:

“There is opportunity, but people have to start to listen to each other instead of trying to convince others that they have got the right solution.”

“NGOs basically have little chance to get a decision to their advantage if it is about substantial things.”

“The RACs in this context [the opinion formation process] are still not so effective as everybody has hoped.”

Sustainable fisheries as common goal in the BS RAC

Interest in sustainable fisheries in the Baltic Sea is often among of the reasons given by the players for being involved in the RAC process. Nevertheless the interviews indicate that there are different perceptions on what the concept of the sustainable fisheries actually means.

“We don’t have the same view on what sustainable fisheries management is. That's an obstacle.”

“I don’t think they understand it [concept of sustainability] fully. I think they understand some part of it, but maybe they don’t want to understand it.”

Trust and Distrust among the stakeholders

Distrust is an issue that is cited as hindering the consensus-building and collaborative dialogue process.

“We have to build up trust and we have to talk about how to build up trust to understand each others opinions - that is where we have to move to. And I don’t think we are there yet. I can feel it from some discussions in the RAC- people get upset about arguments and this has a long history.”

“The Green section - one could feel that they are trying to slow us down, because they see that they don’t have the opinion through. Someone is using the RAC by delaying it.”

Procedure and participation in the BS RAC

Even though we have seen instances of the discussion during the RAC meetings being productive despite controversy, it was not successful in some cases. Participants expressed the view that the process during the meetings should be better regulated and procedures should be clearer.

There were a few opinions that the decision making process is substantially disturbed by those participants who don't take part in the Working Group meetings, where decisions are discussed and consensus often reached. These members only come to the BS RAC Executive Committee, where the decisions should be approved, but time for discussion is limited.

Economic support

A few RAC members mentioned insufficient economic support as obstacle (for example, financial support for participation by members of the RAC, and financing the operations of the RAC itself).

"It (sic) should be more long term funding programme so that we can be sure that the process that we are in can continue".

Communication and understanding of science

One of the crucial areas of our research regards the communication of science, e.g. the scientific advice provided by ICES. This must also include questions of understanding and trust. Here are some examples of contradicting views, which, we believe, could be solved by improved communication.

Communication and understanding:

"ICES must concentrate on communicating, on the level that our fishermen are on. The messages must be made available to the fishermen."

"They [the scientists] speak their own language and sometimes it can be difficult to understand their message."

"The lobby is not science. And if the fishermen say they have a lot of fish in the sea it might also be a misinterpretation. Especially regarding the cod. Everybody knows that if the cod situation is bad, there is accumulation of cod. It is a normal behavior for cod. If the stock is threatened they try to keep together and that is why the fishermen get very high catches. They misunderstand that it is really in extinction."

Distrust of science and scientists:

"We cannot build future, we cannot stabilize fishery just on the ICES predictions. And of course we accept that they are doing their best, but they are doing not enough. So that is the problem – lack of trust in their predictions."

"There are a lot of things that should be done better and can be done better. There are a lot of theories that I distrust, some of the models they [scientists] use I think are ridiculously wrong. They are built on wrong assumptions."

"EC is listening too much to the ICES."

Scientific knowledge versus local fishermen's knowledge:

"It's mainly a difference between science and the common sense. When you are on a ship and you are just putting fish on board, lots of them, you just see there's lots of fish. [...] So it's non-professional [layman] science against real plans."

"I think it is important that the [fishing] industry and ICES improve their dialogue, because ICES would benefit from better data. They will only achieve better data if they cooperate with the industry, and the industry needs to start cooperating with the scientists. I think it's the only way forward."

"Both sides [Fisheries and scientist] have rights to be frustrated because a lot of useful [fisheries] information is not used because of problems in design and proper technological

implementation into the system. This requires very serious and careful engineered solutions.“

Several RAC members suggested that the scientific advice should be discussed more thoroughly in the RAC meetings.

Impact of the BS RAC on the EU governance process

There are perceptions that the decisions made in the BS RAC are used in to too limited a degree by the EC in formulating policy.

“In order to improve the process the European Commission would have to deal more intensively with the statements of the RACs.”

The members of the RAC would like to see the advice produced by the RAC given more consideration by the Commission.

“Unfortunately, it [the RAC] does not have the importance we would like to see.”

“We [the BS RAC] in fact work out documents, which also have a good quality from my view, but which are not well considered by the Commission.”

Conclusions and recommendations based on interviews and observations

As in many areas of environmental policy, the issues on the BS RAC agenda are complex and multi-disciplinary. The political institutional landscape is highly bureaucratic and multiple levels (EU, national, regional) are involved. The members of the RAC and those interacting with it are diverse with regard to:

- goals of organizations represented,
- experience in fishing and fisheries,
- level of understanding of science content,
- methods, and language and
- experience in deliberative decision-making.

The BS RAC has improved organization, trust, and dialogue since its beginnings in 2006. Nevertheless the diversity of the stakeholders leads to difficulties in the dialogues that affect the effectiveness of the consensus finding process. Such difficulties involve:

- facility in using English as common language
- consistency and level of participation of members from different sectors
- differences in approach to decision-making
- differences in the degree to which building consensus is valued

In order to increase the effectiveness of the dialogue, it is therefore necessary to improve the awareness of discussion process and consensus development in RAC meetings. The gcPLUS team therefore recommends that the BS RAC members make a conscious effort to:

- reflect on processes and procedures in the RAC meetings in order to build trust and skill in deliberative decision making
- use dialogue techniques, including joint fact finding and question framing analysis
- separate scientific and technical matters from questions of values
- consider offering training as a moderator/mediator or coaching by an experienced mediator for the chairmen in the working groups.

In order to ensure the consistent participation of a significant number of stakeholders from all relevant groups there is a need to improve the vertical feedback loops between BS RAC and the European Commission. Especially in cases where the EC cannot consider the RAC advice in their decisions, a more detailed feedback about the reasons for declining the advice would not only maintain the sense of value of the RAC contributions, but also stimulate a learning process among the RAC members. Similarly, there is also a need for a better two-way communication with the grass roots constituents of the RAC member organizations to increase recognition of the role of the RAC and participation in its work in order to improve legitimacy and compliance of the final EC decisions.

The role of science in the BS RAC was a special focus of the gcPLUS research. The complexity of the Baltic Sea as an ecological and social system makes scientific assessments and predictions about the state of the fish stocks necessary, but also difficult. It is impossible for science to give a deterministic description of the system and the uncertainty in the scientific assessments makes the precautionary approach necessary. But since its implementation is difficult and involves (non-scientific) value judgements, the borderline between science and policy becomes blurred

at times in the perception of the stakeholders. Other science-related questions that are frequently the subject of discussions among the stakeholders include:

- The scale of temporal and spatial variations compared to measurement systems
- The consideration of multi-species interactions in the scientific assessment of biological stock levels
- The insufficient socio-economic knowledge about human interaction with the ecological system, including when, why, and how fishing is done
- Short-term vs. long-term sustainable goals

Our research has shown that the interplay between science and stakeholder participation has to be improved in order to establish an effective consensus finding process. Barriers to effective dialogue in the BS RAC are, e.g., 1) the use by different individuals of the same scientific terminology, but with different implicit meanings or assumptions, 2) the insufficient integration of local knowledge (especially of the fishermen) into the formal science knowledge and process and 3) the confusion that can occur about the data collection and analysis as contrasted generation of the advice by ICES based upon the data analysis.

These barriers influence the way science is trusted and used in the dialogue between the different stakeholders in the BS RAC. It is significant that although the data are organised and interpreted by ICES, the data collection and collaboration with the fishermen is on national level where significant differences between the countries can be found. This fragmentation by countries challenges collaborative efforts between the BS RAC and scientists. Our results indicate that besides the necessary but difficult efforts to improve the quality of the scientific results, the focus should be laid on increasing the transparency of the scientific process to the RAC members. For science related discussions in the BS RAC, a sound understanding of the scientific process seems often more important and easier to achieve than a “higher” objectivity and reliability of the results of the assessments. For further improvement of understanding and communication of scientific methods, process, and terminology, the gcPLUS team recommends

- developing a written guide to methods and terminology
- using framing of questions and joint fact finding to improve consensus formation on science related issues
- increasing transparency of scientific (advisory) process
- creating more venues for exchange between fishermen, environmental and community groups, and scientists in all member states
- Increasing integration of local knowledge into formal knowledge and processes on local and national levels by stimulating learning and exchange at local level using best practice models

Based on these conclusions and on the understanding of issues, process, and personalities, in and around the BS RAC, interventions and mediation activities developed by gcPLUS were implemented during the second phase of the project. The initial research process, including interviews, observation of meetings and literature reviews, also allowed the gcPLUS team to build trust with the members of the RAC and related groups, which was essential to establish a successful and active collaboration.

Mediation and intervention

The interventions involve two major lines of activities. First, as the need for improved understanding and collaboration with science was generally accepted among the RAC members, gcPLUS organized a “BS RAC science workshop” in May 2009. The planning, structuring and organization of this workshop was done in close collaboration with the chairmen and key members of the RAC in order to provide a helpful and relevant exercise around the issues connected with the use of science in the BS RAC.

Second, the need for facilitation was identified as especially high among the new member states with Poland as the most important of these for the Baltic Sea fisheries. Consequently, gcPLUS encouraged the creation of a facilitated consensus building process within Poland. After talks with the Polish BS RAC members and a visit of the Polish harbors including talks to the heads of several Polish fishermen’s unions, two Polish RAC members and gcPLUS jointly organized an ongoing dialogue process starting with a first meeting in January 2008 with fishermen, environmentalists, scientists, and a national ministry of fishing representative to present and discuss the concepts of mediated dialogues and deliberative decision making.

The summaries of the dialogue workshops are presented in the following section.

BS RAC Science Workshop May 2009

The objective of the workshop was to introduce the methods and rationale for mediated dialogues on strongly contested issues - including question framing, joint fact finding, and polling. The workshop was designed to provide the RAC members with experience in using these methods to address a concrete issue of science, namely the distinction between scientific assessments and policy advice. The purpose of the workshop was to improve the members’ ability to use effective dialogue techniques for developing consensus.

More than 50 people attended the science workshop that was moderated by Ilan Chabay (gcPLUS) and Peter Alder (Keystone Center). Among the participants were not only the members of the BS RAC, but also representatives of the European Commission, ICES, and national governments. The workshop opened with an overview by Christian Stöhr (gcPLUS) of the key results of research conducted by the gcPLUS team in interviews and observations of the BS RAC. Peter Adler, President of the Keystone Center, then outlined strategies and methods for improved consensus formation among groups holding strongly divergent views.

In the second part of the workshop, a panel discussion on “biological assessments and political advice” presented divergent views on the interface between science and how it should enter the policy domain. This led to a wide-ranging discussion of the challenges that the use of science creates in the BS RAC and the importance of strategies and methods to create a better consensus building process and an informed dialogue in the BS RAC.

Part of the challenge was the biological and political complexities involved in coming to conclusions that would help create a Baltic Sea consensus. The different perspectives of fishermen, NGOs, scientists and government, not to mention the eight countries around the table, as well as the needs of the EU and EC make any conversation demanding. The great response to the workshop made the high need and interest for such an approach apparent.

The large turnout for the RAC workshop and the response of those present clearly indicated the recognition of the need for improved dialogue and consensus formation in addressing the complex issues before the RAC. This workshop should be part of longer-term effort to improve

communication and constructive engagement within the RAC and between the RAC and ICES, national ministries, and the European Commission.

Specific issues and concerns raised included:

- RAC members generally perceived the consensus finding process and the presentation of the methods presented as very interesting and relevant.
- Not everyone fully understands the various roles, functions, and structures of groups and institutions that are in or relevant to the RAC. These need to be made more explicit.
- A conscious separation can be made between “technical” questions related to data gathering and analysis and “value” issues in RAC discussions. This increases the likelihood that dialogue is based on common understanding of the science.
- It is important to improve the communication between RAC members and their constituents in order to increase the visibility and legitimization of the BS RAC outcomes as well as the compliance by the constituency. This is being done in some countries (e.g., Denmark and Sweden), but infrequently or not at all in others.
- There is a need for more and better-focused discussions between scientists, environmentalists, and fishermen. The dialogue between scientists and fishermen is often a matter of national and local initiatives and the proceedings in this effort vary a lot between different countries. The RAC nevertheless could and should motivate their members to proceed with this process and encourage learning from best practice examples.

The workshop pointed out the difficulties that in using and communicating about science in the BS RAC and introduced tools and methods to address those difficulties and move towards a better consensus building process and an informed dialogue in the BS RAC.

The interaction of the voices and views of fishermen continues to be a challenge, but good progress seems to be occurring. It may be helpful to design very specific discussions in which:

- a. A very specific policy issue or question is tabled
- b. Fishermen explain what systematic information they want to see brought to the table to strengthen their voice (and help bring it) while others explain what systematic information they are seeking from fishermen
- c. The participants in discussions know when and where that information will be needed and how it can be secured
- d. How that information will be used to help achieve the group’s highest and best advice.

Polish Fisheries Workshop in Gdynia, January 2009

The Gdynia workshop was organized by gcPLUS in collaboration with Ryszard Malik (Polish Fishermen’s Union) and Ewa Milewska (WWF), both Polish members of the BS RAC. Ilan Chabay and Christian Stöhr from gcPLUS and Peter Adler from the Keystone Center, conducted and facilitated the workshop. It was based on the insights gained from the interviews concerning the particular situation for fishermen and fisheries in Poland.

Polish fishermen, ship owners, environmental advocates, commercial fish processors, scientists, and a government ministry representative came together and discussed ways and opportunities to find a more effective process of dialogue on fisheries matters of particular concern for Poland.

In fruitful and constructive discussions with an active participation of all groups, the participants:

- a) Identified several issues of mutual concern, despite many divergent views,
- b) Expressed interest in establishing a more effective mechanism for communication among stakeholder groups in Poland,
- c) Considered different venues and opportunities for effective dialogues, and
- d) Recognized that a more coherent, representative, and effective Polish voice in the Baltic Sea RAC would better serve the interests of all the Polish groups and of the RAC itself.

The most critical element in developing such a new voice for Polish interests in governance of the Baltic fisheries is the establishment of a core group. This core group will consist of members from all relevant stakeholder groups that can introduce and advocate a *new* form of dialogue in pursuit of common goals. Such an "improbable alliance" has three important effects: 1) it reduces unnecessary friction, 2) increases influence, and 3) allows for greater clarity about the most difficult issues.

The Gdynia workshop planted the seeds that were nurtured, and as a next step Ryszard Malik, Ewa Milewska and Steve Karnicki (Sea Fisheries Institute, Gdynia (MIR)) took the lead to identify and convene an informal core group. This has become the "Polish Fisheries Roundtable."

First Polish Fisheries Roundtable, May 2009

This meeting was organized by Ilan Chabay and Peter Adler in collaboration with Ryszard Malik (Polish fisherman's union and BS RAC representative), Ewa Milewska (BSRAC co-chair and WWF Poland), and Steve Karnicki (Science Director, Sea Fisheries Institute, Gdynia). The objective of the first meeting of the Fisheries Roundtable was to develop a new level of dialogue among the diverse stakeholders within Poland on their national and local concerns with governance of Baltic fisheries, and to establish a process and build local experience with analytical, mediated, effective dialogue on fisheries matters of mutual concern for all participants. The goal of this process is to create a more coherent and viable process for identifying, discussing, and resolving certain issues among this group, then to bring a more unified and clearer voice of Polish stakeholders to the BS RAC process and the Polish government.

Since the European Commission has opened the consultation process on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2012, the Commission's green paper on the reform is taken as a focus and driver of the Polish Roundtable. The Roundtable therefore focuses initially on developing and articulating common views on elements of the CFP 2012 reform, which can then be presented to the Polish government, the BS RAC, and the European Commission.

As a result of this first meeting, the participants, representing fisheries, environmental NGOs, science and government in Poland modified and then agreed unanimously to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU), based on a draft version prepared by gcPLUS and Keystone Center. In the MOU the stakeholders express their general willingness to participate in the Roundtable, to cooperate and search fruitful dialogue, and to accept an external moderator as a facilitator of the process. This includes concrete ground rules for the discussions in the meetings to avoid "shouting matches" and unproductive discussions. A copy of the MOU in English is appended with this document.

According to the Polish members, the response to the first meeting is "incredible" and numerous other organizations want to join the initiative. The Polish members also emphasized their view that continued facilitation by gcPLUS is essential.

A 2nd Roundtable meeting among the expanded group was planned for later 2009 to begin

discussing topics in the EC Green Paper on CFP reform – if possible, to be facilitated by Ilan Chabay and gcPLUS. A meeting was held on August 6th, 2009 with Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQ) in Poland as the central topic of discussion. A summary of the meeting follows.

Second Polish Fisheries Roundtable, August 2009

The Baltic Fisheries Round Table met on the 6th August 2009 at the Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia. 20 participants, fishermen, NGOs and scientists participated in this meeting.

The purpose of this meeting was to start a discussion about the segmentation of the Polish fleet and the introduction of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) in Poland between fisheries stakeholders, environmentalist and scientists. The Round table decided to formulate a position. Since Steve Karnicki as one of the organisers of the round table is expert advisor to the Polish government on the Polish position on the CFP reform, a jointly agreed position in the Roundtable on this topics would have a direct link to the Polish policy makers. The position concerning the priorities for the reform of the Common Fisheries policy have to be submitted to the Polish Department of Fisheries until the 11th September.

Segmentation of the Polish fleet:

Emil Kuzebski (Sea Fisheries Institute) made a presentation on fleet segmentation. He explained that segmentation permits to manage the fishing fleet in a more efficient manner, to identify an excessive fishing capacity in particular fleet segments as well as to assess the effects of the fleet scrapping. Segmentation also permits to carry out scrapping and fleet reduction in the right segments of the fleet. He presented the principles to differentiate the fleet into groups of vessels. The simplest being a group of vessels that use the same fishing gear, directed at one species, fishing in one area. Most often it is a fishery consisting of vessels with different fishing gears and directed at various species. A segment is a group of vessels most homogenous in terms of physical parameters and fishing gears.

In the course of the discussion it was underlined that the fishing fleet in the Baltic is sub-divided according to different length parameters than in the North Sea as well as multispecies character of fishery. It was stressed that a rigid division of the fleet (rigid segmentation) is not favourable for fishermen. A multispecies character should be preserved for economic reasons.

As result of an interesting discussion the Round Table adopted the following conclusions:

“We hereby state that the existing segmentation of the fishing fleet for scientific purposes (Regulation 1691/2001) is at present sufficient. Fleet segmentation for management purposes could only be introduced after the process of fleet reduction, carried out in the framework of the Operational Programme “Sustainable development of the fishery sector 2007 – 2013” is completed.

However, there is an immediate need to:

- formulate a new definition of coastal fishery (taking into account other parameters than length of the vessel);
- identify fleet segments in relation to passive fishing gears and technical parameters of vessels;
- identify multipurpose vessels (multispecies vessels);
- identify specialised pelagic vessels. “

Individual transferable quotas (ITQs)

The participants discussed whether there is a need to introduce ITQs. It was underlined that at present under the existing management system the quotas are also transferable. However, the ITQ system foresees a longer quota allocation period (3-5 years or longer). Negative assessments of ITQ systems in Iceland, Canada and New Zealand were brought up. These negative experiences should therefore be taken into account when introducing ITQs. Participants were of the opinion that it should not be permitted to transfer quotas abroad, to avoid selling of a national property such as a fishing quota to other countries. The transferable fishing rights should be precisely defined. The economic advantages of ITQ were mentioned. ITQ should be a percentage share of a TAC and be strictly bound to a fishing vessel or a fishing permit.

It was agreed that a further larger meeting was needed, where experts both from countries using ITQ systems (such as Denmark and Sweden) but also from countries that oppose an ITQ system (such as Iceland or the Faroe Islands) are present. This would allow the stakeholders to learn from these external experiences, since it was accepted that the previous expressed points of views are limited to the local conditions and lack a more sophisticated understanding of the pros and contras of ITQs. It was also agreed that for this meeting, professional mediation as provided by gcPLUS will be necessary as several areas of conflicts are in sight that were left aside for the moment due to the lack of expertise.

Further, a closed internet forum was established in order to allow the members to continue their discussions and exchange materials also between meetings and for a joined and transparent preparation for future discussions.

The next meeting is planned for September 7, 2009 in Gdynia. Ilan Chabay will attend to moderate the discussion with Christian Stöhr also present and observing the process of forming the Polish Fisheries Roundtable as a new multi-stakeholder network.

Scientific Publications and Presentations

- A presentation at the Joint Research Workshop 17-18 March 2008, Guangzhou, China
- A poster presentation at the global Public Communication of Science and Technology conference (PCST-10) 25-27 June 2008, Malmö/Copenhagen, Sweden/Denmark
- A presentation at the Working Group on Fisheries Systems (WGFS) Workshop on Uncertainty and Policy (WSUP): Fisheries in Dialogue with Other Sectors 13-15 October 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark
- A paper presented at the conference “Knowledge, Science and Global Commons”, 6-8 November 2008, Dresden, Germany. The paper will be included as a chapter in a forthcoming peer-reviewed book.
- A presentation at the workshop: Knowledge and Sustainability 24 November 2008, Stockholm, Sweden
- A poster presentation at the International Human Dimensions Programme Open Meeting (IHDP OM) 26-30 April 2009, Bonn, Germany
- Two articles submitted to academic peer-reviewed journals, which have a relatively broad spectrum of readers: *Environmental Science and Policy* and *Environmental Policy and Governance*

Communication Plan

A Communication Plan was produced in cooperation with the Baltic Sea Foundation Secretariat. As part of that plan, a shorter version of this report that is designed and written for distribution to the public and policy makers will be submitted separately to the Baltic Sea Foundation.

Press releases were issued to Polish media and a brief presentation on the project was given by Ilan Chabay at the General Assembly of the BS RAC on May 8th. This and other current material on the project is available on the BS RAC website.

Additional papers based on the research in this project are in preparation and will be submitted to international peer-reviewed journals in the next few months.

Researchers and key supporting people

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