



PAPER GA2

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE NORTH SEA REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

1. Introductory remarks

Extract from the Memorandum of Association “The Executive Committee shall prepare an annual report and an annual strategic plan for the members of the General Assembly which shall be approved by the General Assembly at its annual meeting and forwarded to the Commission, Member States and the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA)”.

Particular attention will be paid to establishing strategic objectives towards the development of advice on the fisheries management of the North Sea Fisheries and for developing original initiatives for the NSRAC itself. Priority will also be given to developing operational procedures which will promote trust and co-operation between the participating stakeholders.

2. Vision

A Council that really contributes to a successful fisheries management in terms of sustainability in ecological and economic terms, understanding and support by its members.

3. Mission statement

The mission of the NSRAC is to foster the development of a sustainable exploitation of the demersal fish and shellfish stocks in the marine environments of the North Sea and Skagerrak/Kattegat.

The NSRAC will do this by preparing and providing advice on the management of these fisheries to the European Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament.

The advice is provided by and on behalf of all stakeholders involved in the NSRAC and with the aim to achieve the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.

4. **Goals of the NSRAC**

- To organize a direct input by the stakeholders most directly concerned with demersal fisheries in the North Sea and Skagerrak/Kattegat.
This bottom up approach of direct involvement of stakeholders should lead to a more effective and sustainable fisheries management.
- By actively involving from the start all the interests directly or indirectly related to the fisheries of the NSRAC, the NSRAC advisory process will lead to real exchanges of thought and, hopefully, to real and feasible solutions in fisheries management, in which the ecological objectives are in balance with the economic needs in a long term perspective.
- The consequent involvement of the broader scientific community related, directly or indirectly, to fisheries management in the NSRAC advisory process, will lead to the improvement of the quality of the advice as well as to a better understanding between the scientific community and NSRAC's stakeholders.

5. **The scope of the NSRAC activities**

In general terms the tasks of the NSRAC will be the following:

- To submit suggestions, on its own accord or at the request of the Commission or a Member State, on matters relating to fisheries management.
- To give an opinion on Commission or Member State proposals on conservation and management dealing with a fishery relevant for the region.
- To comment on and recommend improvements in the implementation of the Community legislation in the region.
- To conduct any other activities which are necessary to achieve its objective?

However, in order to determine the scope of activities the NSRAC and to make choices, the NSRAC will organize its advisory work along the following guidelines:

- The NSRAC shall only give advice on the various fisheries and conservation matters for demersal (i.e. non-pelagic) species
- The NSRAC shall only deal with fisheries in the North Sea (area IVa, IVb and IVc) and Skagerrak/Kattegat (area IIIa)
- The NSRAC shall in principle not advice on horizontal matters regarding the Common Fisheries Policy.
- The NSRAC shall concentrate its advisory effort on:
 - the development of long term management approaches
 - matters in fishery policy of a more principal nature
 - matters in fishery policy of a purely regional (i.e. North Sea and SK/KT) nature
 - other matters with an impact on the state of the resources
- The NSRAC shall refrain from preparing advice on short term matters, but will consider specific requests for advice when put forward with certain urgency by the European Commission and/or Member States.
- The NSRAC will aim strongly at giving advice which is backed by science and for which the socio-economic impact has been assessed.

6. Structure and working of the NSRAC

The General Assembly made up of all members in NSRAC and with participation of observers. The GA. will meet once per year and appoint the Executive Committee to develop its proposals and act as focus for the activities in NSRAC.

NSRAC has established Standing Working Groups in order to examine specific issues and to prepare advice, two of those groups Demersal and Flatfish have merged into one:

Demersal WG
Skagerrak/Kattegatt WG

The WG's may set up subgroups (focus groups, study groups) and/or projects in order to fulfil their obligations.

NSRAC can put in place ad hoc groups to deal with specific issues e.g.

- Development groups

A series of cooperation projects, which has been independently funded, have been carried out:

- long term fisheries management
- socio-economic data collection
- mapping of areas important to fisheries

Attached is proposed 2008-2009 NSRAC workplan

For each NSRAC meeting an agenda will be made and a rapporteur appointed.

The NSRAC has the legal entity of a company under British Law, with a Board of Directors consisting of Chair, Vice Chairs and Executive Secretary. The Chair of Executive Committee will be elected by the Executive Committee for a three year term. The Vice Chairs will be appointed annually one from 1 third and one from the two thirds of the Executive Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair of the General Assembly will appointed annually.

7. External relations of the NSRAC

- **E.U. Commission Co-ordination meetings (2 annually)**
Participation in meetings
Recommendations from NSRAC to EUC
- **Member States Observers at meetings**
Contribute to activities
Provide expertise
- **European Parliament**
- **Community Fisheries Control Agency**
- **Scientific Community**
When NSRAC shall fulfil its obligations, there is a need for input from and co-operation with scientists and experts on different areas (ICES and other scientists e.g. European fisheries economists)
- **Co-ordination with other RAC's**
An Inter RAC administrative committee is organised with the aim to, share experience and best practice, avoid duplication of effort, provide support, co-operate where appropriate when dealing with horizontal issues, co-ordination of meetings etc.

8. Funding / Budget issues

EU Decision

Council Decision 2007/409/EC to amend status of RACs was accepted in June 2007. ***RACs are now "Bodies pursuing an aim of general European interest"***. This means that RACs are now given up to €250,000 = 90% of the total budget, this should give more financial stability.

However due to inflexibility of the rules only one RAC has ever received all of its annual budget. All RACs are working together to try and find an amicable solution to this quite serious problem.

The NSRAC is currently investigating a way forward.

9. Future of NSRAC

The NSRAC is now entering its fifth year of operation and we feel it is important that we carry out a review of how we operate, our successes, things we could have done better and where we want to be in the future.

To facilitate this we will invite an external person to start the process, which, will begin at the first Executive Committee meeting of 2009.