

Fisheries sector: temporary specific action aiming to promote the restructuring of the EU fishing fleets affected by the economic crisis

2008/0144(CNS) - 24/07/2008 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish certain measures for a more rapid adaptation of the Community fishing fleet to the current economic situation.

LEGISLATIVE ACT : Council Regulation (EC) No 744/2008 instituting a temporary specific action aiming to promote the restructuring of the European Community fishing fleets affected by the economic crisis.

CONTENT: this Regulation establishes a specific Community action designed to provide for exceptional and temporary support for the persons and enterprises active in the fisheries sector affected by the economic crisis induced by the increase of oil prices in 2008, as a special regime under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). This Regulation shall apply only to public aid which has been the subject of an administrative decision by the relevant national authorities by 31 December 2010.

The aim of this Regulation is twofold: to provide immediate, temporary aid to those fishermen most affected by the rise in the price of fuel, and to seek a sustainable solution to the in-built overcapacity of European fishing fleets, thereby creating the conditions for greater profitability in the sector.

The Regulation, which will remain in force until 31 December 2010, provides for temporary derogations from certain provisions of the European Fisheries Fund and includes general measures applicable to the fisheries sector and special measures for vessels participating in Fleet Adaptation Schemes. The measures are as follows:

1) Emergency measures

- exceptional emergency aid for the temporary cessation of fishing activities for a maximum period of three months, provided that the vessel in question is covered by a restructuring plan within the six months following the entry into force of the Regulation. The aid may cover part of the costs of crew salaries and the vessel's fixed costs.

2) Measures for vessels participating in a Fleet Adaptation Scheme: these measures apply only to fleets whose energy costs represent at least 30 % of production costs and which undertake to reduce their fishing capacity permanently by at least 30 %. They involve:

- removal of all restrictions on access to premiums for permanent cessation of fishing activities;
- aid for an additional period of temporary cessation of activity of from 6 weeks to 3 months, as appropriate;
- reduction in the level of mandatory private financial participation for the modernisation of gear and engines;
- where vessels are replaced by smaller vessels which consume less fuel, a premium for partial decommissioning, depending on the capacity scrapped and subject to certain conditions.

3) General measures which are not covered by Fleet Adaptation Schemes: these are

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increase in the rate of EFF co-financing of fuel-saving investments, including the replacement of gear and auxiliary engines;

- extension of EFF early departure aid, including early retirement aid, for fishermen, to cover other workers in fisheries-related activities;
- EFF support for energy and restructuring audits and advice, and pilot projects to improve energy efficiency in the fisheries sector.

4) Measures to facilitate use of the Fund's resources:

- raising of the level of EFF cofinancing of action under the Regulation to 95 % of the total public expenditure;
- doubling of EFF prefinancing of operational programmes, from 7 % to 14 %.

Report: the Commission shall report to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of the measures laid down in this Regulation by 31 December 2009 at the latest.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 31/07/2008.