

Fisheries conservation measures in the Havet kring Ven site in the Baltic Sea and the correction of a number of errors thereof

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The Council held a **public debate** in the framework of the common fisheries policy (CFP) reform. The discussion focused on regionalisation and transferable fishing concessions TFCs, two specific issues raised in the proposal for a regulation on the CFP covering the basic provisions of the CFP.

Regionalisation: a large majority of Member States welcomed regionalisation as a flexible approach to adapt to the diversity of regions and countries in the EU. They considered the approach appropriate to tackle in particular multiannual plans but also technical measures. However questions subsisted on the best way to balance the empowerment of member states within the regionalisation and a model where the final decisions remain within an EU framework. **Most of Member States would like the last word to remain at the EU level** in order to ensure a level playing field.

Delegations agreed that **the work of the advisory councils (ACs) would be an important element of consultation** feeding into the preparation of regional positions, as well as relevant legal acts. Many delegations considered that their advisory role should be reinforced. While strengthening the regional approach there is a need to consider if the structure of the ACs should be revised, including the balance between the fishing sector, including representatives of employed fishermen and other interest groups such as environmental organisations and consumers.

Several Member States supported a joint declaration of Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom elaborating a proposal for the process of decision within the framework of regionalisation. Details of fisheries management would be discussed with stakeholders; ACs would play a key role in the discussion alongside the Member States, in particular in the establishment of multi-annual plans. In case of unanimous agreement among Member States the Commission would use implementing acts to adopt the measures but in case of disagreement, measures would be proposed by the Commission for decision by the Council or by the Council and the European Parliament as appropriate.

Transferable fishing concessions (TFCs): views differed concerning the opportunity to introduce mandatory TFCs in the EU.

- Most delegations considered that such a scheme should only be established on a voluntary basis to allow an adaptation to the situation of each country.
- Many Member States mentioned the threat TFCs could impose on coastal communities and small scale fisheries. Some delegations feared that TFCs could trigger an excessive ownership concentration of fishing rights and would prefer TFCs not being exchangeable between Member States in order to avoid jeopardising the relative stability system.

The efficiency of TFCs in reducing the fishing fleet overcapacity was questioned by many delegations. Some delegations thought that the European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF) should continue to tackle overcapacity. The Commission proposal on the basic provisions of the CFP considers that conservation of marine biological resources is key to achieving the objectives of the CFP; it envisages the reinforcement of multi-annual management plans to manage resources at levels that are capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY), and the ending of the practice of discards. To regulate access to

resources better it also introduces a system of transferable fishing concessions, which could constitute a major driver for fleet capacity adjustment. It points out that reliable and full data, both for scientific advice and for implementation and control purposes, is central to well-functioning fisheries management. The proposal establishes that CFP should support the development of the aquaculture industry through strategic planning, alongside the new focus on aquaculture contained in the proposal on a European maritime and fisheries fund.

In addition to the orientation debates on regionalisation and the TFCs, ministers debated during their lunch on **socio-economic aspects of the CFP reform**, in particular the EU priorities among the proposed objectives and associated measures (small-scale fisheries, the creation of jobs and social cohesion in coastal and inland communities) and the necessary measures and financial support needed.

In July 2011, the Council held an initial public exchange of views on Commission proposals for the reform of the CFP.

Concerning the CFP reform, the Council already held policy debates during the March Council on the three main proposals for regulations in the CFP reform "package": basic provisions of the CFP, common organisation (CMO) of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products and the EMFF.

In the Council meeting in March, an orientation debate on the proposal for a regulation on the CFP was focused on the issue of a discard ban. A further orientation debate is planned on MSY and integration of environmental requirements, as well as the issue of the EMFF during the May Council.