Common fisheries policy (CFP)

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The Commission adopted a report on Member States' efforts during 2013 to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities

To recall, under the new Common Fisheries Policy, Member States have to take measures to adjust the fishing capacity of their fleet to their fishing opportunities over time with the objective of achieving a stable and enduring balance between them. The capacity of the individual Member States may not increase, due to the entry-exit regime, and must always remain under the fixed capacity ceilings

Member States have to prepare **an annual report on the fishing capacity**. If a Member State identifies a structural imbalance, it has to prepare and submit **an action plan** for the segments concerned, setting out the adjustment targets, tools and a clear timeframe for its implementation. **In 2014 the Commission received from Member States six action plans**. Discussions are ongoing with some other Member States who have not set out action plans.

The state of the fishing fleet capacity: the report notes that overall, **fleet capacity has been further reduced in recent years**. However, in some segments imbalances remain:

- between 1 July 2013 and 1 January 2015 the fishing capacity of the EU 28 Member States **decreased by 1,1 % in kilowatts (KW) and increased by 0.3 % in gross tonnage (GT).** This increase can be explained by the accession of Croatia in 2014. Not counting the Croatian fleet, the EU fishing capacity was reduced by 4% in GT and by 3.3% in engine power (KW) in the period 2012-beginning 2015, with a reduction in the number of vessels by 3.9;
- on 1 January 2014, 86.879 vessels were registered in the EU fleet register with an overall capacity of 1.658.033 GT and 6.573.806 KW. This shows a **reduction since 2012 of 7.8% in number of vessels, 1.6% in GT and 5.4 % in KW.**

Observations and conclusions: on the basis of the reports from 23 coastal Member States and after assessing the analysis of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee on Fisheries (STECF), the Commission makes the following observations:

- Member States' reports show **steady progress** is being made towards achieving a balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities for the whole of the EU fleet. Only six Member States have identified fleet segments with structural overcapacity. **These imbalances need to be addressed.** Other Member States have not set out action plans whilst the results of the assessment of their fleets would normally lead to the establishment such plans;
- the ex-ante conditionality between the annual fishing fleet capacity reports of the Member States and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) financial assistance represents a significant element in the new CFP to contribute to achieving a healthy and sustainable balance between the capacity of EU fleets and their fishing opportunities;
- **the action plans** are a transparent and effective means in the pursuit of the balance between the fishing fleet capacity and the fishing opportunities over time. For the fleet segments concerned some Member States choose to use the instrument of decommissioning with public aid, while others hope to address the structural imbalances through other mechanisms (such as individual transferable quotas);

- given the fact that under EMFF public support for permanent cessation schemes are phased out by end 2017, Member States should utilise the **decommissioning support in a targeted way, for segments for which Member States have identified structural overcapacity** on the basis of balance indicators provided in the Commission guidelines;
- the analysis by STECF of the Member States' reports shows that **some fleet segments are active on stocks that are currently fished above maximum sustainable yield (MSY).** To enable adjustments, Member States need to continue monitoring the fishing capacity of their fleets in order to achieve viable fleets that operate and exploit sustainably marine biological resources;
- due to lack of data, the analysis by STECF shows that not in all cases **the indicators included in the Commission guidelines** could be calculated for all fleet segments;
- in many Member States the percentage of **inactive vessels** is significant, reaching 50 % in the most extreme cases.

Considering the dynamic nature of both the fishing activities of the Union fleets, and of the resources which are exploited, and given the low level of vessel utilization, the Commission considers that it remains important to monitor closely the fleet capacity developments in light of the fish resources and the policy measures related to them.