EU/Greenland/Denmark Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Implementation Protocol

2021/0037M(NLE) - 05/10/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 603 votes to 16, with 72 abstentions, a non-legislative resolution on the Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union on the one hand, and the Government of Greenland and the Government of Denmark, on the other hand and the Implementation Protocol thereto.

In parallel, Parliament adopted a legislative resolution giving its consent to the conclusion of the agreement and protocol.

Previous agreement and protocol

Parliament stressed that both the Greenlandic and EU fisheries sectors benefit from the Partnership Agreement (SFPA) both from a socio-economic point of view in terms of direct and indirect employment and gross value added generated by the EU fleet's operations in Greenlandic waters. However, it expressed concern that the total allowable catches set by Greenland for several stocks in the previous protocol exceeded scientific advice. It also regretted the lack of scientific data and the capacity to analyse this data, which is necessary for the proper management of the stocks.

New agreement and protocol

Parliament took note of the complexity of the negotiations and of the circumstances in which they took place, as negotiations were being held in parallel on the agreement with the United Kingdom, creating uncertainty, and Greenland was facing some internal political challenges. It recalled that Greenland’s starting position in these negotiations was to slash quotas for EU vessels by 30 %.

Members pointed out that fishing opportunities for the EU fleet have been cut by an average of 5% compared to the previous protocol. They also noted that the duration of the agreement is four years and that it can be renewed for two more years, which may represent a lack of visibility for European vessels.

In addition, the EU’s financial compensation (EUR 16 521 754 per year) is higher than under the previous protocol, while the contribution to sectoral support remains the same and the reference prices for shipowners’ fishing authorisations have risen.

Members stressed that all catches, including by-catches and discards, must be recorded and reported by species in accordance with the applicable Greenlandic legislation. They welcomed the agreement’s sustainability objectives and the parties’ cooperation in efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Greenland as a strategic player in the North Atlantic and Arctic

Stressing that Brexit has destabilised the whole relationship of the North Atlantic countries, the resolution stressed that the resulting consequences for the North Sea and North East Atlantic fisheries should not be

used to manipulate the distribution of quotas in the Northern Agreements. Members also stressed the importance of relations with Greenland in the context of an EU strategy on the Arctic and in the fight to prevent unregulated high seas fishing in the Central Arctic.

Recommendations and requests to the European Commission

The main recommendations to the Commission are as follows:

- ensure that the implementation of the agreement and the protocol thereto help to mitigate global warming and to permit adaptation to its growing effects, to preserve and restore biodiversity and to achieve the sustainability goals set in the European Green Deal, and is aligned with the objectives of the CFP;

- ensure the application of the precautionary approach to the currently exploited and targeted stocks such as cod, redfish and Greenland halibut;

- improve arrangements for data collection and analysis and for updating oversight of use of the EU's financial contribution to sectoral support, with a view to ensuring that stocks fished by the EU are managed sustainably and that the quotas allocated to EU vessels are in fact for surplus stocks;

- ensure improvements in the available data on the fleet size and fishing effort of Greenland's subsistence and small-scale fishing fleets;

- ensure that the protocol is renewed for a further two years in four years' time;

- carry over to the allocation for 2022 all or part of the quotas left unused owing to the delay in the provisional application of the agreement, in line with the best scientific advice;

- ensure that special attention is paid to lost fishing nets, to the collection marine litter, to marine ecosystems and vulnerable species, to the identification of habitats and to bird by-catches, particularly in the context of support for the sector;

- engage in a long-term process of reflection to reduce the instability created by the UK's departure from the EU, particularly in the fisheries sector;

- take full account of the SFPA when the EU establishes its geostrategic position on the Arctic Ocean.

Lastly, the resolution stressed the need for the Commission to keep the European Parliament informed at all stages of the implementation of the SFPA and its protocol.