The future of fisheries in the Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea and Atlantic Ocean in the light of the UK's withdrawal from the EU

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Manuel PIZARRO (S&D, PT) on the future of fisheries in the Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea and Atlantic Ocean in the light of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union has had implications for access to the resources in the maritime space traditionally used by fishing vessels of both Parties. The Withdrawal Agreement and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement laid down the rules that will be in effect until at least 30 June 2026. However, the consequences of Brexit are not yet fully known, especially as the Fisheries Trade and Cooperation Agreement is ongoing and not yet fully implemented. Issues that were not addressed in the agreement, such as aquaculture aspects, are still emerging.

UK relations

The report stressed the need for the EU and the UK to continue to work together to ensure **good international governance of the oceans**, promoting the sustainable use and exploitation of their resources and fostering the protection and restoration of areas, based on the best and latest scientific knowledge.

Members deplored the fact that the Trade and Cooperation Agreement gradually reduces the share of fishing opportunities in UK waters for the EU fleet by 25 % over a five-and-a-half-year period. They called on the Commission to take all the necessary measures to ensure that reciprocal **access to waters and fisheries resources is maintained after 30 June 2026** and that there are no further reductions of quotas for EU fishers after the end of the transition period. They asked for the mechanisms for the exchange of fishing quotas between the Parties to be streamlined and manageable for the sector.

Open negotiations

The report stressed that the EU should keep all negotiation channels open with the UK, as well as with all third countries, but should never shy away from using, if necessary, all legal instruments at its disposal, including those **limiting market access**.

If the UK were to consider limiting access after the adjustment period, the EU would be able to take measures to protect its interests, such as re-introducing tariffs or quotas for UK fish imports, or suspending other parts of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, if there was a risk of serious economic or social hardship for EU fishing communities.

Members also deplored the fact that the new international context in the North-East Atlantic after Brexit is being used by third countries and territories such as **Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands** to adopt unilateral decisions that have a significant and negative impact on EU fish stocks and fishing fleets. They called for these adverse effects to be taken into account and addressed.

Brexit Adjustment Reserve

Members called on the Commission to assist the Member States to make full use of the funds under the Brexit Adjustment Reserve to promote and support the sector and the coastal communities affected and to compensate for the losses suffered, in particular the loss of their quotas to the full extent. The report stressed that these funds need to be put to the benefit of all fishers and businesses concerned, including small-scale fisheries.

Member States are called on to use the funds earmarked for fisheries under the reserve and to **allocate further sums** where needed. These funds should be used while taking account of the fact that the transition period for quotas will last until 30 June 2026.

Vessel licences

Members are concerned by the situation in relation to licences for EU vessels in the waters of the Crown Dependencies and the lack of commitment by the United Kingdom to faithfully implement the Trade and Cooperation Agreement in this regard.

The report called on the United Kingdom, therefore, to **refrain from making restrictive and controversial interpretations of licensing conditions**, in particular for vessels which have historically fished in the 6to-12 nautical mile zone of the British territorial sea and in the waters of the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey and the Isle of Man. Members called on the UK to immediately cease all intimidating controls on EU vessels and refrain from imposing discriminatory technical measures.

The Commission is asked to consider all options to ensure that the rights of EU ships are respected by the UK.

Specialised Committee

The report underlined the role of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries in seeking a common approach on technical measures and, where appropriate, discussing any measures of which one Party may give notice to the other. It recalled the importance of a rapid establishment and functioning of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries, which will monitor the implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. It insisted on the need for close monitoring of the decisions of this committee by the European Parliament, through its Committee on Fisheries, by means of the presence of observers at the committee's meetings.

Advisory groups

The report stressed the importance of including regional entities that represent the sector and regional public authorities in advisory groups, ensuring that the coastal communities of regions directly or indirectly affected are legally protected under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, including from the effects of any unilateral decisions taken by the United Kingdom.

Members called for representatives of the fisheries sector, regional authorities, coastal communities and other stakeholders to be actively involved in the monitoring and implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.