Co-management of fisheries in the EU and the contribution of the fisheries sector for the implementation of management measures

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The European Parliament adopted by 583 votes to 10, with 33 abstentions, a resolution on co-management of fisheries in the EU and the contribution of the fisheries sector for the implementation of management measures.

Contribution of co-management to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy

Members considered that the general principle of fisheries co-management can be promoted at both European and national level through support and guidance. Some Member States and regions have a legal framework for co-management. However, to date there is no legislation at EU level and few tools to support the implementation of co-management mechanisms, even though co-management is used to manage certain fisheries in many EU Member States, applying rules that are fully in line with the current CFP.

Parliament recalled that in all the co-management cases analysed, there is a **clear potential to improve the environmental sustainability of the resources**, while preserving the economic and social benefits of the activity, as social and economic stakeholders are directly involved in decision-making under co-management. These co-management systems have proven more resilient to shocks such as COVID-19 and have also seen a reduction in conflict and greater fluidity in fisheries management decision-making, promoting democratisation, transparency, trust and compliance.

Co-management also helps to create the conditions for the fisheries sector to be economically viable and competitive, to ensure an adequate standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities and to take into account the interests of both consumers and producers. Furthermore, as research bodies are directly involved in co-management systems, the improvement of scientific data collection is ensured.

The Commission is invited to evaluate examples of fisheries co-management in the EU in order to identify good practices, in particular where these concern effectively involving the relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process, and to endorse phasing in co-management within other fisheries and in the regional fisheries bodies in which it participates.

Main obstacles to co-management in the EU and possible solutions

The resolution highlighted the lack of specific legislation, tools and instruments in the EU to facilitate the implementation of fisheries co-management systems. This makes it difficult to implement the proper models in several Member States, despite the interest that the sector and administrations may have in implementing them in a given area.

Parliament asked the Commission to develop a **voluntary non-binding regulatory framework** for fisheries co-management. This framework should provide the necessary flexibility to maintain current practices and traditions, as well as an assessment of how these practices could be encouraged and facilitated, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity and building on existing success stories in Member States and third countries.

Members stressed that to ensure more effective co-management systems, clear rules are needed to facilitate all aspects of making co-management work well, such as setting up co-management committees, and to speed up the processes of implementing measures. They underlined the specific role of advisory councils in ensuring stakeholder participation in the EU decision-making process.

Fisheries co-management to be included in the forthcoming review of the Common Fisheries Policy

Parliament recommended that any future reform of the CFP should include co-management, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). This should be done in accordance with the principle of **subsidiarity** to ensure that the different co-management models already in place are not undermined, and to ensure that stakeholders, such as fishermen, authorities and the scientific community, are properly consulted and involved in the decision-making process.

Member States are invited to **support the establishment of fisheries co-management systems** through the immediate implementation of national and legal frameworks, building on good practices observed in other Member States and with the support of the Commission.

The resolution underlined the need to also develop **cross-border co-management tools** for certain regions, with the support and involvement of the Commission. As an example, it mentioned the arrangement between France, the UK and the Channel Islands for the management of fisheries in the region, which has become more centralised after the Brexit. Members insisted that the Commission should assume its role as the EU's representative vis-à-vis third countries and propose advanced models of participatory management and co-management also in cross-border situations with third countries.

Parliament called on the EU to facilitate the implementation of co-management, stressing that EU co-management measures should focus on initiatives at local, regional and national level, as well as on the exchange of best practices.