The implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel

2023/2030(INI) - 21/11/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 487 votes to 19, with 89 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel.

In 2007, Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 was adopted, establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel. It has a broad, holistic approach to the management of the eel stock, covering different life stages and migration routes of the eel. Its scope covers Union waters, coastal lagoons, estuaries, and rivers and communicating inland waters of Member States that flow into the seas. The Eel Regulation lays down an obligation for Member States to develop national eel management plans (EMP), with a uniform objective and an internationally coordinated, triannual monitoring and evaluation process.

19 Member States have adopted EMPs for almost 90 Eel Management Units, covering around 1 880 actions. Six Member States (Cyprus, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary) are exempted from preparing an EMP. Slovenia and Bulgaria (for its river systems outside the Black Sea) have not prepared their EMPs and Croatia is currently developing its EMP.

The Eel Regulation as the most appropriate, holistic instrument

The Commission and the Member States are called on to make full use of the Eel Regulation as the core policy for the management and recovery of the eel stock once again, ensuring a holistic and coherent approach, which also includes fully implementing measures in other relevant areas outside of fisheries.

The Eel Regulation was found to be fit for purpose by the Commission evaluation of 2020. Parliament is of the opinion, nevertheless, that better implementation of the Eel Regulation and additional, strengthened actions by Member States are needed in order to ensure that the Regulation is enacted comprehensively. It also underlined that the Eel Regulation is holistic and comprehensive, captures both the marine and freshwater life stages of the eel and addresses both fisheries and non-fisheries impacts.

Governance and feedback

Parliament highlighted that there is a delay in the implementation of the Eel Regulation and that the reporting of data is incomplete. It also regretted the fact that the number of Member States adhering to the reporting requirement has declined over the years.

The resolution stated that there is no feedback mechanism ensuring follow-up action and regular policy updates by the Member States in the Eel Regulation. Therefore, Parliament called for the creation of an **eel-specific expert group** ensuring full and balanced representation of all relevant stakeholders, with representatives from the Member States and the fishing sector, recreational fishers, water managers, hydro-power companies, civil society organisations and other relevant parties.

Furthermore, Member States are urged regularly to update their EMPs, based on the best available scientific knowledge and advice.

Eel fisheries measures

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to monitor existing restrictions on fisheries and, where necessary, propose actions to improve the sustainability of eel fisheries. The resolution stated that restocking is a necessary measure in the short to medium term until the problem of migration barriers is solved adequately. Member States should continue the practice of restocking.

Non-fisheries/migration measures

The resolution stressed that more work needs to be done on non-fisheries factors that have an impact on eel mortality. Member States are called on to **remove obsolete dams** and other barriers or to create solutions that allow species migration as a matter of urgency, so as to **secure migration routes**, as already addressed in the relevant parts of the biodiversity strategy and the European Green Deal. Members stressed that there are fish-friendly alternatives on the market to make **water pumps and hydro-power stations passable for fish**. In this regard, Member States should make fish safety and welfare a mandatory requirement for new installations and for old ones when they are replaced.

Measures against illegal trade and poaching

Stressing that IUU fishing and illegal trade continue to be a significant problem, Parliament emphasised that more checks on and monitoring of the Eel Regulation are needed. Member States are called on to impose truly dissuasive sanctions and to **harmonise financial fines** between other Member States.

Moreover, Members also highlighted the importance of certification schemes to ensure the legality of catches.

Scientific research and harmonising data collection

The resolution recalled that little is known about the eel life cycle, including its spawning process and the exact reasons for the stock decline. Therefore, more scientific research is called for, with sufficient funding and human resources, into the status of the stock and the reasons for its decline.

Lastly, data collection, monitoring and reporting should be **harmonised** and standardised so that data can be compared.