Fisheries sector: arrangements regarding Community structural assistance (amend Regul. 3699/93/EEC))

1995/0058(CNS) - 17/01/1996 - Committee of the Regions: opinion

The opinion went beyond the scope of the Commission’s proposal for a set of accompanying socio-economic measures for the restructuring of the fisheries sector, examining in somewhat wider terms the impact of measures taken under the common fisheries policy and making observations of a more fundamental nature. The over-capacity of the fisheries fleet was incompatible with the decline in resources. The opinion was being expressed in the present context of diversification of the fisheries sector and retraining of the workforce. The opinion underlined the fact that the basic resources of the fisheries industries were often located some distance away from those regions that depended on them for revenue and employment. The nature of this link between a regional industry and its resource base was not at all conventional and this greatly complicated the situation affecting this sector. The opinion went on to denounce the centralised nature of the industry, which ran the risk of not being as sensitive to regional needs as those systems that closely combined ‘users’ with the implementation of decisions. There was also a need to attach greater importance to the differences that existed between the various coastal regions and their ecological systems. It was to be expected that the measures taken under the common fisheries policy would have an unpredictable and arbitrary impact on the territory of the Community. While the measures of support being provided were likely to improve matters in the short term, it appeared nevertheless that a more fundamental approach was needed. Any actions initiated should take greater account of capital resources management and incorporate this aspect more fully into the decisions taken, and should also include the users in the decision making process. In this way it was likely that respect for the regulations would increase in line with the level of involvement of ‘users’ in the regional management process. Finally, any solution in which responsibility for policy implementation was devolved to local level could constitute a more effective and more viable interpretation of the ‘principle of subsidiarity’, according to which responsibility was to be divided among the most appropriate levels, and could lead to greater success in achieving the general objectives of the common fisheries policy. The Committee of the Regions also called for new fisheries rights for Community fishermen operating in non-EU waters and recommended increasing the budget allocation for measures in favour of fishermen as provided by the FIFG fisheries fund and the PESCA initiative.