EC/Morocco fisheries agreement: conversion of vessels and fishermen following the non-renewal of the agreement

2001/0163(CNS) - 18/07/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To promote the conversion of fishing vessels and the reintegration of fishermen into the Community following the cessation of the Moroccan/EU fishing agreement. CONTENT: Up until 30 November 1999, more than 400 ships and around 4300 fishermen were dependant on fishing in Moroccan waters. All that changed when an EU fishing agreement with Morocco became null and void. Since then the European Union has been making efforts to integrate those fishermen effected by the cancellation of the agreement back into the economic community. This has largely been achieved through the FIFG financial instrument. FIFG funding for these fishermen is set to run until 31 December 2001. In addition to FIFG funding those regions worst hit by the nullification of the fishing treaty are benefitting from Objective 1 financing under the Structural Funds. For the period 2000-2006, Andalusia is set to benefit from around EUR 38 million, Galicia from EUR 19 million and the Canary Islands EUR 15 million. This proposal specifically examines ways in which to make fishing vessels designed for fishing in Moroccan waters obsolete as well as ways of helping fishermen to establish fresh employment opportunities. In terms of facilitating the permanent cessation of fishing vessels, the proposal suggests a number of options. One would be the simple demolition of the vessels in question, a further option would be the transfer to a third country of the vessels or alternatively that they be transferred to other fishing activities. The proposed Council Regulation suggest that specific action should cover 70% of conversion plans and should be implemented within the context of existing structural funds. The Commission is of the opinion that a minimum of 40% of the amount must be used for scrapping vessels and to change their purpose into non-fishing activities. Not more than 28% should be used for the export of vessels, joint ventures and the modernisation vessels and lastly 32% of the funding should be used for socio-economic activities. The Commission hopes that this funding will complement and be compatible with existing FIFG funding. Requests for payment must be made by 30 June 2004 at the latest.