Budgetary discipline: flexibility instrument for the conversion of the spanish and portuguese fleets

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PURPOSE: To seek extra financial assistance for the conversion of Spanish and Portuguese fleets through the mobilisation of the inter-institutional flexibility instrument. CONTENT: Since the Fishing Protocol between the European Union and the Kingdom of Morocco became null and void the Commission has been spearheading efforts aimed at resettling those fishermen worst affected by the cessation of fishing in Moroccan waters. In July 2001 the Commission prepared a proposal in which it outlined appropriate measures for the disbanding of the Spanish/Portuguese fleet coupled with socio-economic initiatives. Funding for the proposed measures is based on appraisals similar to those funded by the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) and modelled on the FIFG's working methods. This measure is covered by the second heading "Structural operations", subheading "Structural Funds" of the financial perspective. In view of the total cost of this particular measure (EUR281 million) and the funds already available under the Structural Funds, the Commission is now proposing an additional sum of EUR197 million. Paragraph 24 of the Inter-institutional Agreement provides for the use of the flexibility instrument to allow financing "for a given financial year and up to the amount indicated (the annual amount being EUR200 million) of clearly identified expenditure, which could not be financed within the limits of the ceilings available for one of more other headings". The Commission therefore proposes that the flexibility instrument be used to fiance the measures proposed for the disbanding of the Spanish and Portuguese fleets.