

Structural assistance in the fisheries sector: rules and arrangements

2002/0116(CNS) - 28/05/2002 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation 2792/1999/EC laying down the detailed rules and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance in the fisheries sector. **CONTENT** : regulation 2792/1999/EC of 17 December 1999 laying down the detailed rules and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance in the fisheries sector needs to be amended, in the context of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, for the following reasons: - the present Regulation includes provisions regarding the restructuring of the Community fishing fleet that must be made consistent with the proposed Regulation on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy; - appropriate provisions should be laid down for the period commencing on 1 January 2003 for the existing regime adjusting fishing capacity which is based around Multi-annual Guidance Programmes (MAGP); - the four successive MAGPs reduced overall capacity between 1983 and 2002, but could not prevent serious deterioration of a large number of economically important fish stocks. Emergency measures had to be taken in 2001 to prevent some of these stocks from collapsing. The Commission has repeatedly highlighted the shortcomings of the MAGPs and the problems linked to their implementation. In its communication on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (Roadmap), the Commission underscore the need for a simpler, more effective and more transparent fleet policy, which should be based on the following three main lines of action: - restrictions on aid for modernisation, renewal and export of fishing vessels; - special measures for vessels affected by multi-annual management plans; - a simpler system for limiting fishing capacity; - these lines of action are translated in the proposals for a Regulation on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy, for a Regulation establishing an emergency Community measure for scrapping fishing vessels, and in the present proposal with regard to the following amendments to Regulation 2792/1999/EC: - the renewal of the fleet must take place without any increase in fishing effort, within a sound economic environment and without public financial support. Aid to modernise the fleet will be permitted only if it improve safety, hygiene, working conditions or the quality of fisheries products on board, or if improves fishing patterns (selectively or in gears), etc) with no increase in fishing effort in either case; - public aid for the export of vessels to third countries and the setting up of joint ventures will no longer be permitted. Such measures only result in a transfer of Community over-capacity to third countries and do not correspond to a reasonable use of European taxpayers money; - measures in support of small-scale coastal fishing should not increase fishing effort especially in fragile coastal marine ecosystems, nor should they increase the impact of towed gears on the benthos; - socio-economic measures are already used to reduce fishing effort, by encouraging fishermen to retrain or to diversify their activities away from the marine fisheries sector. However, it is proposed to allow the beneficiaries of diversification measures, to continue fishing on a part time basis, provided that their fishing effort is reduced. Regarding the obligatory financial participations by Member States to measures co-financed by the Community, it is proposed to modify Article 19 of Regulation 2792/1999/EC of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) in order to simplify and the procedures concerned and to speed-up reimbursement process. Lastly, the proposal will have no financial implications on the overall budgetary commitment of the FIFG. However, it will be necessary to negotiate with the Member States the introduction of the relevant changes within their programme documents.