

Conservation of fish resources: reduction of the quantity of by-catches of cetaceans

2003/0163(CNS) - 24/07/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to lay down measures concerning incidental catches of cetaceans in fisheries and amending Regulation 88/98/EC. **CONTENT** : the proposed Regulation aims to curb the accidental capture of cetaceans such as dolphins and harbour porpoises in fishing gear, as this is threatening the conservation of these species. The measures taken by Member States under Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the so-called "Habitats" Directive), has been insufficient to adequately protect these animals. There are insufficient data to allow a precise estimation of the number of accidental catches of cetaceans in fishing gear, their distribution and their impact on populations. However, available scientific advice shows that most of the fishing gears commonly used in European fisheries are responsible for some cetacean by-catch. The most serious problems appear to be caused by gillnets and pelagic (mid-water) trawls. An overall reduction of fishing pressure is expected as a result of other Community measures aimed at ensuring the sustainability of fisheries. This proposal for a Regulation completes the response to scientific advice by providing additional measures to address the incidental catches of cetaceans in fisheries. More specifically, the proposed measures aim at : a) for the Baltic sea, restricting and further phasing out the use of drift-nets. Comparable measures are already established by Community law in all other waters. The proposed restrictions in the Baltic consist in limiting immediately the length of drift-nets to maximum 2.5 km, associated with a phasing out process with a view to a total ban on this gear in the Baltic Sea as from 1 January 2007. b) requiring the use of acoustic deterrent devices, better known as 'pingers', in fisheries where the effectiveness of such devices has been confirmed in reducing incidental catches of cetaceans. c) establishing monitoring programmes, using independent observers, for gathering extended information on by-catch of cetaceans for numerous fisheries with a potentially high risk of incidental catches of cetaceans.