# Agenda 2000: Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance FIFG, structural measures

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The report by Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE (EPP, E) on structural measures in the fisheries sector voices concern that the EU's fisheries policy is to lose its special identity. If a strictly regional approach is used for fisheries, the danger is that measures for the fisheries sector will be subordinated to other priorities. The committee has therefore called for a single legal framework to be preserved as the basis for all measures in this sector.The main issue is the need to define the objectives of the FIFG (the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance) for the period 2000-2006. The details of EU financial participation are due to be settled later when the special fisheries regulation is reviewed. The committee is suggesting an entirely new approach which departs considerably from the Commission's proposal. MEPs believe the proposal poses major risks to the fisheries industry, especially areas covered by Objective 2 (conversion of industrial and rural areas or areas dependent on fishing which are facing structural difficulties). The main danger is that the horizontal nature of the structural fisheries policy might be lost and be replaced by an exclusively regional approach. Were this to happen, fisheries in some regions would become dependent on the FIFG and in others on the EAGGF Guarantee Section, though only with regard to restructuring measures. Apart from the problems of consistency and complexity which such a division would engender, there is also a risk of relocations, with fishermen going wherever most benefit can be derived from the Funds, thereby contributing to the process of decline. Another sensitive point is the definition of "coastal areas", which is much more restrictive than "areas dependent on fishing" as it does not cover hinterland areas, where Structural Fund measures are needed to encourage the processing and aquaculture industries. Lastly, establishing a link between eligibility for funding and unemployment levels could penalise an industry in which a low unemployment rate does not mean there is no need for structural support. As there seems no realistic prospect of a new objective being created specifically for fisheries, the report proposes instead that a single horizontal regulation be introduced for the fisheries sector. It suggests the inclusion of a number of horizontal provisions which would only be concerned with structural measures in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. In administrative and financial terms, funding provided under the FIFG comes under Objectives 1 and 2 of the Structural Funds. It covers all structural measures in this sector for Objective 1 and 2 regions, whereas the EAGGF Guarantee Section would only apply to measures outside these two categories of region.