

Structural assistance in the fisheries sector: rules and arrangements

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The committee adopted the report by Daniel VARELA SUANZES-CARPEGNA (EPP-ED, E) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure. It wanted public aid to be maintained not only for fleet modernisation, as proposed, but also for fleet renewal and for the transfer to third countries of vessels involved in joint ventures. It accordingly reinstated, wholly or in part, a large number of the provisions of the original Regulation 2792/99/EC. However, recognising that measures needed to be taken to ensure that public aid would not lead to an increase in fleet capacity, the committee proposed that a harmonised Community register of vessels be created for all the Member States, with an indication of capacity and power to be measured using identical and easily accessible criteria to enable the Commission to carry out its monitoring tasks. The register would be used to 'freeze' fleet growth, in the sense that no new capacity could be introduced without withdrawing equivalent capacity from the fleet. The committee also said that any new policy to reduce fleet capacity should be based on the degree to which the targets established by the Commission in the MAGPs for each Member State had actually been complied with, to avoid penalising those who were already implementing those objectives. Member States which did not comply with MAGP IV should not be eligible for public aid for fleet renewal and modernisation. The committee was critical of the Commission for its weak enforcement of the MAGP targets, but recognised that in future the Commission needed to have at its disposal "an effective, transparent and dissuasive system of penalties for non-compliance". Lastly, the committee also reinstated the clause in the 1999 regulation allowing for nationally-funded socio-economic flanking measures designed to facilitate the temporary suspension of fishing under plans to protect resources.