# Fisheries: reduction of discards of fish by the fishing fleets, action plan

2003/2036(INI) - 20/05/2003

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Niels BUSK (ELDR, DK) on the Commission communication. The report made a number of recommendations designed to improve on the Commission's strategy for dealing with the problem of discards: - there was a need for adequate data collection in order to obtain a better, more precise picture of the extent of the problem; - given the link between the selectivity of fishing gear and the percentage of the catch discarded, the Commission was urged to consider ways of giving preferential access to fish stocks for those fleets employing more selective fishing gear resulting in lower discards; - the Commission should also continue to monitor research findings on alternative fishing gear with a view to improving technical measures such as net mesh sizes and windows; - a review of the TAC/quota policy was needed as a way of reducing discards; the Commission should also look into setting up a system in which fishing effort would be the main instrument for controlling fishing pressure and in which TACs and quotas would play "a secondary role"; - real-time closure to fishing for a limited period should be used as a basic management tool in areas with a high concentration of juvenile fish at specific points in the biological cycle. The Council was urged to rapidly adopt the proposals to this effect made by the Commission in the cod and hake recovery plans; - in many cases discards meant the pointless loss of high-value fish, which should instead be used to improve the economic results of fishing. Moreover, fish should be used where possible for the production of fish meal and oil instead of being discarded. The Commission was urged to put forward measures, including financial incentives, to encourage this. Lastly, the report pointed out that the discarding of fish could also be reduced "by means of greater self-discipline among fishermen". It expressed criticism of cod fishermen who, at a time when biologists were proposing a total ban on cod fishing, tended to discard smaller specimens - which nevertheless fulfilled the minimum size requirement - because they wanted to catch bigger fish.