Common fisheries policy: action plan 2003-2005 for uniform implementation, common inspection structure

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Ilda FIGUEIREDO (EUL/NGL, P) welcoming the Commission communication and the proposed Action Plan. The report stressed that access to and exploitation of fish stocks must be monitored at all stages of the fisheries chain on the basis of a regime "combining clear rules with a single monitoring procedure". It also emphasised the need for real participation by all concerned in all stages of the policy, in such a way as to take account of the regional dimension inherent in the CFP and to reflect the specific characteristics of fisheries management and its impact on vulnerable coastal communities. MEPs pointed out that fishermen were more likely to accept, and to comply with, the rules governing fisheries if they were involved at all levels of the decision-making process. The committee expressed support for the measures aimed at harmonising processes and objectives but said that it was important not to lose sight of objective regional differences or undermine the specific role of individual Member States, who were ultimately responsible for the monitoring of fisheries activities. Moreover, the programmes should be based on the experience acquired over the years by the various Member States, notably in crossborder cooperation. MEPs also supported the proposal to introduce a code of conduct for inspection, on the basis of dialogue with the sector and the national authorities. While welcoming the Commission's intention to put forward a proposal on setting up a Joint Inspection Structure and a Community Fisheries Control Agency with a view to coordinating the national inspection and surveillance services, the committee wanted a feasibility study to be carried out beforehand, including a comparative cost-benefit analysis, and called on the Commission to explore alternative models for cooperation at Community level in the field of monitoring and implementation. Lastly, the report urged the Commission to take an active part in monitoring and in funding the monitoring tasks carried out in international waters administered by the international fisheries organisations, in order to coordinate fisheries monitoring by the EU in these fishing grounds and make it more efficient.