Common fisheries policy: closer dialogue with industry and groups concerned

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PURPOSE: encourage closer dialogue with the fishing industry and groups affected by the common fisheries policy. CONTENT: The relations between the Commission and the fishing industry, in particular within the Advisory Committee on Fisheries, are no longer satisfactory either to the Commission or to the industry. This observation has led the Commission to consider a reform of the Committee, whose role within the CFP needs to be upgraded. The objective of the reform is to create the conditions for responsible, transparent and well-informed dialogue with all those affected by the CFP by: - closer dialogue with the fishing and aquaculture industry; - widening the dialogue to association active in environmental and development fields. The purpose of this 2-way flow of communication is to improve, with the industry's help, the thrust, design and implementation of the CFP. The CFP is a highly integrated policy applying to widely diversified fishing activities spread over a large geographical area, now rendered even more complex to manage with the prospect of the Community's enlargement. The emergence of Europe-wide dialogue within the Advisory Committee on Fisheries calls for a redution in the number of seats of each European organisation if the expression of national positions is to be avoided. Such a reduction is, however, likely to weaken the organisations by making it impossible for them to meet. It is, therefore, proposed to assist the European organisations by allowing them to meet to prepare for Committee meetings. Reforming the Advisory Committee would be insufficient on its own to improve dialogue with the industry substantially if the Commission were not at the same time to take steps to help the trade organisations on the Committee to carry nout all their tasks (initiative, representation, coordination, information) and to ensure that exchanges between the Commission and the parties concerned were passed down to the grass roots. It is accordingly proposed that the reform of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and the adoption of measures to reinforce Europe's fisheries trade organisations be accompanied by measures to develop communication. Four measures are proposed to enhance the capacity of these organisations to take part in dialogue: - Giving preference to European organisations and associations; - Ensuring that European trade associations are freely accessible; - Clarifying the tasks and objectives of the organisations; - Financial support to improve European coordination. Commission action is going to focus on two main priorities: 1) Establishing ongoing contacts with existing trade and association networks to improve communication with and between these network, as well as producing and dissemination documents tailored to the special interests and needs of the various groups (written, audiovisual and electronic material); 2) Communication with all the groups concerned and putting in place instruments giving very wide access to data and explanatory material mainly concerning Commission proposals. this will involve developing a special Commission Website and a regular explanatory publication, with sections covering the variousinterests of the industry and the groups concerned. The budget needed to implement these measures will be covered partly by the Structural Funds where they are included in the tasks of the Funds. A significant proportion of them are not covered by the Funds and consequently warrant a special budget (dialogue and explanations on aspects of the common fisheries policy not connected with Structural Fund measures).