

European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

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The Council held a policy debate on the proposal for a Council Regulation on a European Fisheries Fund, on the basis of a questionnaire drawn up by the Presidency, and invited Coreper to continue discussions on this proposal.

Nearly all the delegations took the floor to answer the five questions in the questionnaire.

In general, the principles laid down in the proposal were accepted by a vast majority of Member States, including the five priority axis proposed for the 2007-2013 period.

Several delegations supported the principles of the CFP reform of December 2002, whereby the Council decided to end subsidies for renewal of fishing vessels and to limit aid for their modernisation to works aimed at improving safety, hygiene and working conditions on board and did not concern fishing capacities. However, other delegations asked for the reintroduction of the aid for renewal and/or modernisation, in particular taking into account specific circumstances such as the situation of outermost regions and small-scale fisheries. Some delegations also insisted on the need to maintain a premium for young fishermen.

As regards the two-year limit for the implementation of national plans for the adjustment of fishing effort, several delegations asked for a longer period of time. Some delegations also questioned the mandatory nature of the socio-economic measures proposed.

Several delegations requested that explicit reference be made to inland fisheries support in the proposal, as it is currently dealt with within FIFG.

A number of delegations also requested extension of the aid to aquaculture and processing sectors to medium-sized enterprises and processing businesses.

Finally, a large number of delegations asked for increased flexibility and subsidiarity in the setting of criteria for the eligibility of fishing coastal areas.

Commissioner Borg noted the broad support expressed by delegations for the Commission proposal, and said he looked for bilateral meetings to be held with delegations in order to go into the proposal in further detail.