

Common fisheries policy: conservation and sustainable exploitation (repeal. Regulations (EEC) No 3760/92 and (EEC) No 101/76)

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The European Commission has presented its annual report on Member States' efforts during 2003 to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities.

Council Regulation 2371/2002/EC and Commission Regulation 1438/2003/EC require Member States to submit to the Commission, before 1 May each year, a report on their efforts during the previous year to achieve a sustainable balance between fleet capacity and available fishing opportunities. On the basis of these reports and the data in the Community Fishing Fleet Register the Commission produced for the year 2003 a summary which was presented to the 'Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries' (STECF) and the 'Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture'. In this report the Commission now presents that summary, accompanied by the opinions of the above-mentioned committees, to the Council and the European Parliament.

This report is divided into two parts: the first part describes the rules that must be followed by Member States in managing their fleets and summarises the information submitted according to Article 13 of Commission Regulation 1438/2003 on implementing rules for fleet policy; the second part shows the development of Member States' fleets' capacities in 2003 in the form of numeric tables containing the relevant information on the entries and exits of vessels for each national fleet. It should be noted that the fleets of new Member States that joined the European Union at 1 May 2004 are not covered by this report as they were not subject to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in 2003.

The report concludes that in 2003 the overall capacity of the Community fleet was reduced by 40.362 GT and 142.727 kW, which represents a reduction of 2 % of the total capacity of the Community fleet. 44 % of the capacity withdrawals from the fleet were supported by public aid which means that this capacity cannot be replaced.

It was not possible to fully assess whether Member States have complied with the entry/exit "at any time" rule because the necessary adaptation of the fleet register only became operational on 1 September 2004. As stated under section 3 on page 5 of this report, the data relating to entries in 2003 based on decisions taken before 1 January 2003 was submitted by the Member States separately and could not be directly verified in the Community fishing fleet register. The Commission will continue to control these data in order to assess their quality. The information on how Member States have complied with the "at any time" rule and on the exact application of the 1:1,35 ratio for publicly assisted entries of vessels between 100 GT and 400 GT will be made available in future reports.

The tables contained in the report summarises compliance, at 31 December 2003, with the entry/exit regime and the reference levels. A majority of Member States have complied with these rules. However, Belgium and Italy do not comply with the tonnage ceiling and Italy does not comply with the engine power ceiling. In addition, Belgium does not comply with the reference level in tonnage.

The Italian authorities contest these conclusions and argue that the Italian fleet has respected the entry-exit provisions. In order to support this claim they have lately submitted additional information, not included in the CFR, which the Commission services are now analysing.