Member States' efforts during 2005 to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities

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PURPOSE: Commission report on Member States’ efforts during 2005 to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities.

CONTENT: The Commission present this report following the requirement in Article 14 of Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002and Article 12 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1438/2003, which require Member States to submit to the Commission a report on their efforts during the previous year to achieve a sustainable balance between fleet capacity and available fishing opportunities.

The 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 (EC) No1438 /2003 on implementing rules for fleet policy;

- the second part shows the development of Member States’ fleet capacities in 2005 in the form of numeric tables and graphs containing the relevant information on the management of entries and exits of vessels for each national fleet.

The Commission considers that the quality of the reports submitted by Member States has improved compared to that of 2004. Member States emphasised in their reports the implementation of the national fleet management regime but the assessment of the balance between fishing fleet capacity and available fishing opportunities is more complete than in previous reports.

Results for the mainland fleet (Community fleet except vessels registered in the outermost regions): a ccording to the Community Fleet Register the three-year period during 2003 – 2005, the overall capacity of the Community fleet of the EU-15 Member States was reduced by 117,000 GT and 499,000 kW, which represents a net reduction of 6.27 % of the tonnage and 7.28 % of the power of the EU-15 fleet. The net reduction during 2005 was of approximately 50,000 GT, while it was of 23,000 GT in 2004 and 44,000 GT in 2003. These reductions appear to be relatively small, if one considers the high levels of fishing pressure in most Community fisheries, particularly for demersal species.

In the new Member States, starting from 1 May 2004, fleet capacity has been reduced by 41,000 GT and 101,000 kW, which represents a reduction of 18 % in tonnage and 18 % in power for their fleets compared to their fishing capacity on the accession date. During 2003, 2004 and 2005 approximately 132,000 GT and 427,000 kW were withdrawn from the EU fleet with public aid, which means that this capacity cannot be replaced. Of this capacity withdrawn with public aid, the overwhelming majority (112,000 GT and 373,000 kW) came from the EU-15 Member States. The capacity withdrawn by the new Member States with public aid since 1 May 2004 was 20,000 GT and 54,000 kW.

A majority of Member States have complied with the rules. However, Greece did not comply with the entry-exit regime in terms of tonnage, although its degree of non-compliance is very small, since the tonnage ceiling was exceeded by only 0.29%. The Greek authorities contest the assessment of the Commission; according to them, Greece has complied with the entry-exit regime.

Results for the fleets registered in the outermost regions: the fleet registered in the Spanish and Portuguese outermost regions has been significantly reduced both in terms of tonnage and power. For the French overseas departments there has been a slight decrease in the total number of vessels and their tonnage and an increase in power. With regard to the application of the special regime for these fleets, out of the 17 outermost regions segments, one had exceeded its reference level in terms of power at the end of 2005 (the segment '4FJ - vessels under 12 m in length of the French Department of Martinique) and another segment exceeded its reference level in terms of tonnage (the segment 'CA3' – vessels of more than 12 m in length registered in the Canary Islands and fishing in international and third country waters). The special regime ceases to apply to these segments from the moment they reach their maximum reference level and reference to regulation.

The Commission goes on to state that the summary report is based on the Member States' annual reports and on the data extracted from the CFR. Some marginal discrepancies remain between the figures presented by Member States in their reports and those resulting from their declarations to the CFR. Work on eliminating these differences should be continued.

In order to improve the quality of annual reports the Commission, together with the Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture, intends to establish more detailed guidelines for their content and to introduce a common harmonised methodological approach with greater emphasis on an analysis of the development of fishing capacity in relation to the available fish stocks. These issues will be discussed in forthcoming meetings of the Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture.

In forthcoming annual reports more attention should be paid to the contribution of the new regime adopted in 2002 to manage the Community fleet to achieve a better balance between fleets and fish stocks. The impact of national decommissioning schemes, in particular on fishing effort reductions in fisheries subject to management or recovery plans, should be better identified and assessed.