Basic information

2005/2032(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Fisheries sector: the recovery of the Community eels stocks, development of a Community action plan **Subject** 3.15.01 Fish stocks, conservation of fishery resources 3.15.04 Management of fisheries, fisheries, fishing grounds	

Key players

	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
European Parliament	PECH Fisheries	MAAT Albert Jan (PPE-DE)	02/02/2005

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
01/10/2003	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2003)0573	Summary
10/03/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
04/10/2005	Vote in committee		Summary
06/10/2005	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0284/2005	
15/11/2005	Decision by Parliament	T6-0425/2005	Summary
15/11/2005	Results of vote in Parliament		
15/11/2005	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2005/2032(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PECH/6/26553

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Amendments tabled in committee		PE362.599	07/09/2005	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0284/2005	06/10/2005	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0425/2005	15/11/2005	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2003)0573	01/10/2003	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2005)5015	15/12/2005	

Fisheries sector: the recovery of the Community eels stocks, development of a Community action plan

2005/2032(INI) - 01/10/2003 - Non-legislative basic document

Eels are exploited in most European countries and are involved in re-stocking and aquaculture practices. The European eel is therefore important not only as a natural asset but also as an economic resource for European fishermen and aquaculturists.

Concerns about its conservation have been growing recently and the need for conservation and management measures has been clearly identified by scientists, managers, and even by the public at large. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) recommended in its October 2002 report that a recovery plan for European eel is urgently needed. ICES further advised that the rebuilding plan should include measures to reduce exploitation of all life stages and restore habitats. It also recommended that if no such plan is agreed, exploitation should be reduced to the lowest possible level.

At present, conservation measures are being taken at national level in Community and non-Community countries. However, given the fundamental trans-boundary migration pattern of European eel, national measures are not sufficient to ensure adequate conservation of this species in Europe . Hence the need for Community action.

The overall approach is centred on the ICES advice. A number of actions are identified that are intended to develop a comprehensive basis for rebuilding eel stocks, based on locally appropriate actions and targets. This rebuilding and management approach requires substantial acquisition of new scientific data before it can be fully implemented. Therefore, the Commission will urgently seek to identify a panoply of precautionary measures for rapid implementation, while the rebuilding plan is being developed.

The challenge for the Community is rapidly to design a management system that ensures that the local measures produce results in a consistent way across the various river basins, Member States, and adjacent countries. This eel management system should be one in which all stakeholders make a contribution to stock recovery, and those contributions should be quantified and equitably distributed.

Current knowledge about eel stocks and their management is insufficient, however, to support the development of such a system. The Community therefore needs to build the basis for such a management system, while undertaking some emergency measures to promote stock recovery.

The essentially local nature of eel management measures means that it is not appropriate for the Community to be involved in the detail of implementing actions. Thus, responsibility for the attainment of the local eel management targets should remain with the Member States , as well as the choice of management instruments to reach those targets.

However, the Community should be responsible for:

- Establishing targets for eel management at different life stages;

- Collating information on and reporting on the effects of the measures in place;

- Proposing Community-level measures where these can reinforce local measures;

- Backing up local efforts by scientific and technical support;

- The international dimension of eel conservation.

The Commission's approach to securing eel management is to establish standard targets for eel management conditions, and to propose legislation that places the responsibility to reach these targets upon Member States. To complement this approach, it will help develop standard data collection systems to monitor the state of the stocks with respect to the targets. It will also pursue measures to improve coordination, information, and research concerning eel. The Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture could assist it in these activities. The Commission will also seek to reach international agreements concerning eel management with third countries.

While these actions are being developed into a management plan for eel, the Commission will examine a number of emergency measures that could be applied with immediate effect. The highest initial priority will be placed on assuring the survival and escapement of silver eel on their downstream migrations.

The Commission proposes that the following specific actions are undertaken:

- It will seek scientific advice concerning the identification of appropriate parameters for defining targets and the values of these parameters when used as targets for settlement, stocking and escapement, having regard to the productivity of various river basins. It will then make legislative proposals.

- It will seek scientific advice on the development of a data collection system that is consistent with the definition of targets, and make corresponding legislative proposals.

- It will consider amending the current Community data collection scheme for fisheries to include eel.

- It will, after seeking relevant scientific advice, propose the prohibition of the use of fishing gears likely to catch silver eel in specific areas and seasons. Measures to facilitate the downstream migration of silver eel will also be proposed. This will be followed by additional proposals to improve the survival of other life stages of eel.

- It will obtain compilations and evaluations of legal and technical measures enacted in all Member States with the primary purpose of eel protection. It will also propose that consultation processes concerning eel should be developed through ACFA.

- It will complement the initiative at Community level with a similar initiative at multilateral level, thus bringing relevant non-Community countries into the efforts to manage eels. This will require promoting management action in GFCM and in bilateral discussion.

Fisheries sector: the recovery of the Community eels stocks, development of a Community action plan

2005/2032(INI) - 15/11/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Albert Jan **MAAT**(EPP-ED, NL) on the development of a Community Action Plan for the recovery of European eels . (Please see the summary of 04/10/2002.) Parliament called on the Commission to ask the Member States as soon as possible to draw up national management plans, which should comprise the following elements :

-technical measures to be taken where obstacles exist in waterways, in order to optimise the migration - i.e. upstream colonisation and downstream movement towards the sea - of eels;

-gathering of data on, monitoring of and, if appropriate, limits, where justified by historic and scientific data, on fishing effort by both professional and recreational fishermen by means of temporary bans on fishing and/or limits on catch capacity, with due regard for national differences in types of fishing and for credible self-regulation;

-increasing restocking with glass eels and fattened farmed eels in the managed areas in European inland waters

-ensuring that eel farming is not so extensive as to disturb the viability of wild eel fisheries, either by depriving them of glass eels which naturally replenish stocks or by failing to ensure escapement of mature silver eels for natural spawning;

-measures relating to the management of cormorant populations to reduce eel mortality.

Furthermore, Parliament asked the Commission to:

-investigate any obstacles in the oceans to the natural migration of eels to the Sargasso Sea ;

-carry out research into the health of eels and the obstacles which such external factors as PCBs and fish diseases may present to successful migration and breeding;

-carry out research into the biogeographical distribution of stocks of this species of eel;

-carry out research into pollution as a factor in assessing possible causes of mortality among eel stocks in freshwater waterways;

-investigate the scope for supporting the process of change, inter alia by means of access to the European Fisheries Fund;

-adjust the policy on catches and exports of eel in such a way that enough glass eels are available for natural migration and enough glass eels are available at a reasonable price for restocking of natural eel habitats in accordance with sustainable fisheries management in Europe;

-propose measures to manage fishing and marketing and to monitor the quantities of glass eels offered for sale by means of a system of documentation of catches, in order to combat illegal fishing more effectively, this being responsible for a substantial reduction in young and adult eel stocks.

Finally, Parliament asked the Commission to insert in the fisheries budget a separate entry for cofinancing of the restructuring of inland fisheries in Europe and to mitigate the impact of a change of policy in the glass eel sector.