Basic information

2012/2009(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure lapsed or withdrawn
Special report 12/2011 (2011 discharge): Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities? **Subject** 3.15.01 Fish stocks, conservation of fishery resources 3.15.03 Fishing fleets, safety of fishing vessels 8.70.03.07 Previous discharges	

Key players

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	Budget	ŠEMETA Algirdas

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
12/12/2011	Non-legislative basic document published	N7-0003/2012	Summary
02/02/2012	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
09/07/2012	Vote in committee		
16/07/2012	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0228/2012	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2012/2009(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 101
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure lapsed or withdrawn
Committee dossier	CONT/7/08662

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE489.373	08/05/2012	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0228/2012	16/07/2012	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Non-legislative basic document	N7-0003/2012	12/12/2011	Summary

Additional information		
Source	**Document**	**Date**
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Special report 12/2011 (2011 discharge): Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?

2012/2009(DEC) - 12/12/2011 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present special report No 12/2011 from the European Court of Auditors (ECA) on whether EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of EU fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities.

CONTENT: the report recalls that the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) aims to promote sustainable fishing by achieving a balance between fish resources and fishing fleets in order to **avoid overexploitation of fish stocks**. The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) provides € 4.3 billion for the programming period 2007 – 2013 to support the CFP.

This European Court of Auditors' (ECA) **performance audit** assessed whether EU measures effectively contributed to adapting the capacity of the fleets to available fishing opportunities.

The Court examined two main questions:

is the framework for the reduction of fleet capacity clear;

are specific measures well defined and implemented?

The audit was carried out at the Commission and in seven Member States (Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal and the UK) selected on the basis of the size of their fishing fleets and the resources available for adapting their fishing fleets under the EFF.

Court of Auditor's conclusions: the audit concluded that overcapacity of the fishing fleet continues to be one of the main reasons for the failure of the CFP in assuring a sustainable fishing activity. The ECA has previously issued 2 special reports (No 3/1993 and No 7/2007) stressing the **problem of overcapacity**.

Although the reduction of fishing overcapacity has been a recurrent theme in previous reforms of the CFP, current measures have failed.

The ECA found **important weaknesses in the framework**:

- the framework, design and implementation of measures to balance fishing capacity with available fishing opportunities is unsatisfactory;
- the existing definitions of fishing capacity no longer adequately reflect the ability of fishing vessels to catch fish;
- **ceilings do not impose real restrictions on fishing capacity**;
- although the alignment of fishing capacity to fishing opportunities is one of the cornerstones of the CFP and the EFF, fishing overcapacity has not been defined or quantified;
- Member States have not done their part under the CFP to put effective measures in place to match fishing capacity with opportunities;
- four of the seven Member States examined had set inadequate targets for reducing fishing capacity.

Court's recommendations: the ECA makes a series of recommendations to address overcapacity and the sustainability of the fishing sector:

- the Commission should better define fishing capacity and overcapacity and consider more relevant robust measures to facilitate actions balancing fishing capacity with fishing opportunities;
- set effective limits for fishing fleet capacity;
- clarify whether fishing right transfer schemes have a role in reducing fishing overcapacity;

- Member States have to ensure that any measures to aid investments on board are strictly applied and do not increase fishing ability; and ensure that selection criteria for fishing vessel decommissioning schemes are designed to have a positive impact on the sustainability of the targeted fish stocks and avoid providing public aid for decommissioning inactive fishing vessels.

Special report 12/2011 (2011 discharge): Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?

2012/2009(DEC) - 16/07/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Marta ANDREASEN (EFD, UK)

On the Special report No 12/2011 (2011 discharge): “Have EU measures contributed to adapting the capacity of the fishing fleets to available fishing opportunities?”

Members note that the special reports of the Court of Auditors provide information on issues of concern related to the implementation of expenditure, and are thus a tool for Parliament in the exercise of its role as the discharge authority. They note its damning appraisal of the measures undertaken by both the Commission and Member States.

Members take note that**, in spite of the reduction of fishing, overcapacity has been a recurrent theme in previous reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** and that the expensive measures taken to date to reduce fishing overcapacity by adapting the fishing fleet to fishing resources have been unsuccessful.

They recognises that, as from 1995, the trend for Union fish catches has been declining and that this decline is largely due to overfishing and forms part of a vicious circle involving fishing overcapacity and low economic performance of the fishing fleet.

In particular, they note that, since the last reform of the CFP in 2002, fish catches have declined by 1 million tonnes and jobs in the fishing sector have declined from 421 000 to 351 000.

Members therefore call for:

- **more relevant and robust measures to facilitate actions to balance fishing capacity with fishing opportunities**;
- a report to be drafted urgently containing the data on existing overcapacity in the Union, broken down by fishery and country;
- given both the technological advances and the capacity of today’s fishing fleets (which has increased with an average of 3% per year during the last decade), the updating of the fleet registers in the Member States, and the introduction of an obligation to report on their efforts to balance fishing capacity with fishing opportunities.

The committee also calls for:

- the adaptation of fleets to existing fishing opportunities;
- the application of measures and programmes to decommission fishing vessels that are designed to have a positive impact on the sustainability of the targeted fish stocks;
- the setting of effective fishing fleet capacity ceilings;
- a reform of the CFP is needed to that regionalises its implementation and the management of its programmes and measures.

Improved monitoring: Members also express concern at the problem of the scrapping of fishing vessels. The scrapping schemes have, in part, been badly implemented, with examples of tax payers' money being used for the scrapping of already inactive vessels or even being used indirectly for building new vessels. They stress the need for strict safeguards when using scrapping schemes, as a way of reducing overcapacity in order to avoid abuse. Members also want the Commission to call on the national authorities to enforce stricter checks before deciding on the funding of projects of investments on board.

Court recommendations: lastly, Members endorse the Court’s recommendations made in the conclusions of the Special Report, which are also their own conclusions:

- actions should be developed to effectively reduce overcapacity of the fishing fleet and to better define and measure fishing capacity and fishing overcapacity;
- the aid scheme for modernising vessels should be reconsidered and the role of fishing right transfer schemes clarified;
- clear selection rules should be established for fishing vessel decommissioning schemes;
- Member States should implement the EFF on time and that any publicly funded investments on board should not have an increased fishing ability as a result;
- the fleet register should be correctly updated, and Member State reports should contain the required information and be of suitable quality.

Lastly, Members highlight the fact that the EFF and CFP are currently an ineffective use of our common resources; they therefore call for the re-structuring of the fisheries programmes to be done in such as way as to ensure that they are as efficient as possible.