

Introduction of capacity limits for Eastern Baltic cod, data collection and control measures in the Baltic Sea and permanent cessation for fleets fishing for Eastern Baltic cod

2019/0246(COD) - 31/10/2019 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to provide financial support to fishermen affected by the closure of the Eastern Baltic cod fishery to permanently decommission their fishing vessels.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the Baltic Sea ecosystem has been fragile for decades. However, it was only in 2019 that the scientists warned about the impact of environmental conditions on Eastern Baltic cod. This situation is leading to a steep decline in this species and even in the total absence of fishing activities, the Eastern Baltic cod stock is not expected to recover until 2024.

Therefore given the above situation, this year, acting upon the best available scientific advice and in accordance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy and the Multiannual Plan for the Baltic Sea established by [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/1139](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, the Commission adopted first emergency measures in July 2019 prohibiting the fishing of Eastern Baltic cod until year-end; and secondly, the Council decided in October 2019 on necessary and unprecedented fishing restrictions for 2020.

Commission analysis shows that the fleet segments with the highest dependency on Eastern Baltic cod encompass more than 300 vessels, mainly trawlers and netters in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, and to a lesser extent Denmark. These fleet segments are of significant socioeconomic importance, representing between roughly 20% and 50% of the respective national fleet in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, expressed in full-time equivalents. Of these, only a minority seem resilient enough to survive a short-term – but not a medium or long-term – closure.

The Commission has therefore concluded that urgent measures are needed in this sector. Support for the permanent cessation of activities through ship scrapping has been granted until the end of 2017 under the European Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Fund (EAMF) established by [Regulation \(EU\) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#). This proposal would reintroduce this measure, under new and strict conditions, for the Eastern Baltic cod fleet until the end of the current FEAMP period (2014-2020).

CONTENT: the proposal to amend Regulations (EU) 2016/1139 and (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council provides the following:

Financial assistance of the EMFF

The proposal aims to allow Member States affected by the exceptional situation of Eastern Baltic cod to grant financial support for achieving and maintaining a balance between the fleet capacity and the fishing

opportunities by making financial support for permanent cessation of fishing activities through scrapping eligible under the EMFF 2014-2022.

These Member States would have the possibility to redirect available appropriations for storage aid and Integrated Maritime Policy inside the financial envelope of each Member State to the permanent cessation of fishing activities with a view to reinforce the need to scrap vessels, while at the same time not negatively impacting the achievements of other CFP objectives and the implementation of the EMFF.

Aid for the permanent cessation of fishing activities shall only be granted for the scrapping of fishing vessels. It shall not be granted for the retrofitting of fishing vessels for activities other than commercial fishing, such as recreational fishing, that have a detrimental impact on the ecosystem.

Reduction capacity

According to ICES advice, approximately 70% of the cod landings in subdivisions 24-28 were taken by trawlers with a BACOMA with a 120 mm escape window or T90, and 15% of the cod landings were taken by gillnetters with mesh sizes between 110 mm and 156 mm.

Under this proposal, the Member State capacity level of these two fleet segments shall be capped at levels of active vessels in the most recent years before the application of emergency measures, i.e. 2017 and 2018, and shall be reduced when vessels are withdrawn with public aid, with the aim of rebuilding the stock of Eastern Baltic cod.

Monitoring of cod catches

Given the serious condition of the Eastern Baltic cod stock additional measures to control the fisheries catching Eastern Baltic cod should be introduced. The threshold quantity as of which a fishing vessel is required to land its catch in a specific place should be reduced to 250kg. Masters of fishing vessels having quotas for cod and fishing in areas where Eastern Baltic cod is present are to ensure that their fishing activity can be monitored at any time by the national competent authorities.

From 2020 onwards, vessels fishing for cod in the Eastern Baltic shall be equipped with a satellite-based vessel monitoring system (VMS) or other equivalent electronic monitoring system. In order to improve data collection, the observer coverage shall reach at least 20% for vessels catching Eastern Baltic cod.