


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	1996/2141(INI)	Procedure completed
Current situation and perspectives of fisheries agreements		
Subject 3.15.15 Fisheries agreements and cooperation		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	PECH Fisheries		24/04/1996
		PSE CRAMPTON Peter Duncan	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	BUDG Budgets		26/02/1997
		PSE JÖNS Karin	
	RELA External Economic Relations		25/07/1996
		GUE/NGL NOVO Honório	
	DEVE Development and Cooperation		24/07/1996
		PSE KOUCHNER Bernard	

Key events			
05/03/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	B4-0126/1996	
05/09/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
16/04/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
16/04/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0149/1997	
14/05/1997	Debate in Parliament		
15/05/1997	Decision by Parliament	T4-0239/1997	Summary
15/05/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
02/06/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1996/2141(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/4/08093

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document	B4-0126/1996	05/03/1996	EP	
Document attached to the procedure	COM(1996)0488	30/10/1996	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A4-0149/1997 OJ C 167 02.06.1997, p. 0002	16/04/1997	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T4-0239/1997 OJ C 167 02.06.1997, p. 0114-0130	15/05/1997	EP	Summary

Current situation and perspectives of fisheries agreements

OBJECTIVE: this document takes stock of the Union's external policy on fisheries from 1977 to 1996 and presents perspectives for the development of these agreements in the short and medium-term. SUBSTANCE: at present the Community has concluded 26 fisheries agreements: 15 with countries in Africa and the Indian Ocean, 10 with North Atlantic countries (including 5 in the Baltic Sea) and one with Argentina for a total budget of ECU 280 m in 1996 and fishing possibilities of 132 000 GRT. There are five main types of agreement: . reciprocal agreements: fishing opportunities for the Community in exchange for equivalent opportunities for the other country (e.g. with Norway, the Baltic countries, etc.). . agreements on access to surplus stocks and allowing Community fishermen to operate in the waters of a third country (Canada, USA). . agreements on access to resources for Community vessels in exchange for financial compensation (ACP, Morocco). . agreements authorizing exploitation of resources in return for financial compensation and market access (Greenland). . an agreement with Argentina involving the constitution of joint enterprises and joint ventures. These agreements are negotiated in accordance with the negotiating directives decided by the Council and are based on the principles contained in the UN Law of the Sea Convention and the Lomé Convention (ACP states). They are commercial in nature but there is a specific element in the EC-ACP agreements - apart from the financial compensation the Community includes a development aspect including, for example, the recruitment of local crews, the landing of catches and training programmes. Provisions were also made for control on fishing activities. - Objectives of the agreements: the fisheries agreements have played a key role in the common fisheries policy (CFP). These objectives relate particularly to the direct and indirect employment in fishing, the stability of fishing opportunities provided for the European fleet, fish and fish products supplied to the Community market and the restructuring of the EC fleet. - Perspectives: various factors influence the development of the fisheries agreements: . the EC's available financial resources leave little margin for the negotiation of new agreements, . international management of fisheries stocks geared towards the sustainable exploitation of resources. The Community must therefore differentiate its external fisheries policy. Hence the Commission proposes four short and medium-term options: . reduction of the Community fleet operating in non-Community waters: such a solution would cause very severe problems in terms of employment and the conversion of the vessels concerned; it would also increase the EC's dependence for supplies of fishery products; . renunciation of the least attractive agreements: this solution would allow economies to be made and effort to be concentrated on the most economic agreements, but it disregards the links established with the third countries concerned; . concentration of financial resources on the most attractive agreements: this option, associated with the previous one, involves negotiating the financial component of those agreements awaiting renewal in order to match them to the Community's true interests (thus in this case all financing of 'development' programmes would have to be abandoned); . modification of the current repartition of costs of the fisheries agreements: currently the Community assumes the major share of the cost of the agreements; in this option the vessel owners and/or Member States would assume a greater share of the cost. ?

Current situation and perspectives of fisheries agreements

On the basis of a series of amendments and compromises the Committee unanimously adopted the own-initiative report by Mr Peter CRAMPTON (PSE, UK) on international fisheries agreements. The report focused on the agreements reached with developing countries, which in most cases provided for access to surplus fishery stocks in the waters of these countries in exchange for financial compensation. While stressing that the 'fundamental objective' of these agreements was not to help develop the local economies, which was rather the responsibility of development policy, the report stated that such agreements nevertheless had a major impact on sectoral development in many countries. A balance therefore had to be found between the interests of the Community fishing fleet and those of the developing countries which were signatory to these agreements. To this effect the report proposed a number of guidelines which should be taken into consideration by the Commission when concluding agreements of this type. These included the availability of reliable information on the resources situation and the periodical evaluation of these resources, the assessment of local resources in respect of scientific research, monitoring and control, consultations with local representatives to ensure that the interests of local fishing communities were taken into

account, coordination with other Community activities and the provision of an assessment system which was not limited merely to the financial aspects of the agreement in cost-benefit terms. The report took the view that applying these guidelines to the fisheries agreements would benefit both the EU and third countries alike. ?

Current situation and perspectives of fisheries agreements

In adopting the report by Mr Peter CRAMPTON (PSE, UK) on international fisheries agreements, the European Parliament called on the Commission to present a proposal for a regulation establishing a framework for international fisheries agreements signed by the Community. Stressing that these agreements must comply with the international obligations and basic aims of the Community, Parliament called for a number of principles to be applied when defining and implementing the said agreements: - the sustainable exploitation of living marine resources, measures to prevent the depletion of target and non-target species and the prevention of damage to marine habitats, - guaranteed access of Community vessels to fishery resources, - cooperation between all parties concerned for the purpose of assessing fishery stocks, scientific research, conservation measures, monitoring and control, the coexistence of industrial and traditional fishing methods, the introduction and application of regional measures, - total consistency between the fishery agreements and EU policy in other areas (including the impact on employment in regions dependent on fishing). Parliament called on the Commission to take note of the impact of the agreements on the application of Article 130a and Article 130b of the EC Treaty and urged it to pursue a policy which would provide information on, and allow for the monitoring and control of, agreements concluded with third countries. At the same time, the Commission was called on to lay down a series of guidelines which would allow the agreements to be assessed in a uniform manner after their expiry. These guidelines should contain the following elements: - information on fishery resources prior to the signing of any agreement and periodical assessment of resources during the period of application of the agreement, - assessment of resources in respect of the scientific research, monitoring, control and training available in the third countries, - consultation with representatives from local fishing communities and consideration of their interests, - coordination with other Community activities, - analysis of the cost/benefit aspects of the agreement, including not just the financial parameters but all relevant factors, - inclusion of measures designed to ensure that the local landing of catches is not detrimental to the operation of local fish markets, - introduction of a mechanism enabling third countries to inform the EU of the results of Community-financed programmes for research, education and training, - the future profitability of the Community fishing fleet, - the setting up of a public register of companies and undertakings which benefit from the fisheries agreements and publication of the criteria of access to the waters of the third countries referred to in each of the agreements. In addition, Parliament hoped that, while respecting international obligations and codes of conduct, the fisheries agreements would help maintain, reinforce and diversify the Community fishermen's access to fishery resources. Recalling that the entire responsibility for setting the capacities of the catches taken in their waters resided with those States which bordered the sea, Parliament nevertheless called on the Community to set an example by encouraging the rational use of marine resources. From this perspective, the conservation of resources should be given a high priority in all agreements signed with third countries. On the matter of the budget, Parliament referred to the interinstitutional declaration of 12 December 1996 on improving information to the budgetary authority on the subject of fishery agreements and recalled that it was up to this body, within the framework of the annual budgetary procedure and the financial perspectives (1998-1999), to determine the budget allocation for the fisheries agreements. Finally, at institutional level, Parliament asked to be consulted on the mandate for negotiation laid down by the Council and reaffirmed its criteria for the definition of the concepts of 'considerable budgetary implications' under Article 228, third paragraph, second line, of the Treaty on European Union, allowing Parliament to be consulted on all agreements and financial protocols relating to fisheries, in accordance with the assent procedure. ?