


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2003/2034(INI)	Procedure completed
Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries		
Subject 3.15.15 Fisheries agreements and cooperation 5.05 Economic growth		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	PECH Fisheries		23/01/2003
		PPE-DE CUNHA Arlindo	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
Council of the European Union	ENVI Environment, Public Health, Consumer Policy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	DEVE Development and Cooperation		21/01/2003
		PSE VALENCIANO Elena	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2481	27/01/2003
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Maritime Affairs and Fisheries		

Key events			
23/12/2002	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2002)0637	Summary
27/01/2003	Debate in Council	2481	Summary
13/03/2003	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
09/09/2003	Vote in committee		Summary
09/09/2003	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0303/2003	
08/10/2003	Debate in Parliament		
09/10/2003	Decision by Parliament	T5-0431/2003	Summary
09/10/2003	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2003/2034(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PECH/5/19305

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2002)0637	23/12/2002	EC	Summary
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report		CES0583/2003 OJ C 208 03.09.2003, p. 0035-0038	14/05/2003	ESC	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0303/2003	09/09/2003	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0431/2003	09/10/2003	EP	Summary

Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries

PURPOSE : to present a communication from the Commission on an integrated framework for Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPA) with third countries. **CONTENT** : the European Commission has issued a Communication on ways to improve the Fisheries Agreements concluded with third countries, particularly with developing coastal states. The Commission proposes that EU fisheries bilateral relations move from access agreements to "Partnership Agreements" which contribute to responsible fishing in the mutual interest of the Parties concerned. These Partnership agreements will ensure both that the interests of the EU distant-water fleet are protected and that the conditions to achieve sustainable fisheries in the waters of the partner concerned are strengthened. This Communication is part of the Commission proposals on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. The Commission believes that the approach proposed in this document should be progressively implemented. The agreements targeted here are those which involve the payment of a financial compensation in return for access to identified fishing possibilities for EU vessels in the waters under the jurisdiction of a third coastal state. It is felt that it is necessary to widen the scope of the EU financial contribution. This contribution mainly covers expenditure linked to management costs, the scientific assessment of fish stocks, fisheries management, control and monitoring of fishing activities, as well as expenditure for the follow-up and evaluation of the agreement. In future, this contribution will be justified by the mutual interest of the two parties to invest in a sustainable fisheries policy and not just as a payment for access rights to fishing possibilities. The EU financial contribution should be regarded as an investment for the improvement of responsible and rational fishing. As these agreements are predominantly concluded with developing countries, the Commission believes that a policy dialogue in the fisheries field is necessary to help our partners develop a fisheries policy that will improve their capacity to achieve sustainable fisheries and contribute to development objectives. It is important to maintain the quality, diversity and availability of fisheries resources for food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. To this end the issues to be identified include the assessment of the national policy for the fishing industry defined by the coastal state, the needs expressed by the partner for the sustainable development of its fishing sector, the share of the surplus that the coastal state is prepared to allocate to EU fishermen, the possible threat to the environment with a view to adopting appropriate remedial action and the concerns of civil society. Whenever possible, in the mutual interest of the parties involved, the FPAs would support measures promoting the creation of joint enterprises, transfers of know-how and technologies and investment in management capacity for the benefit of the fishing industry in accordance with the objectives and guidelines of the co-operation partnership agreement between the EU and the third country concerned. ?

Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries

The Council took note of the Commission's presentation of the communication on an integrated framework for fisheries partnership agreements with third countries and of some general observations by delegations. The Council instructs the Permanent Committee of representatives to examine the communication in detail.

The Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch and Italian delegations recalled the importance of the Council Conclusions on this issue adopted on 30 October 1997. The Spanish and Portuguese delegations requested that full use of the fishing possibilities could be made within the fishing agreements. The German delegation pointed out that the sustainability of fishing resources and an improved financial involvement of the private sector were two key issues to be addressed. The Italian and the Greek delegations favoured the approach of the Commission although they made it clear that improving partnerships with third countries should not be made at the expense of commercial aspects. The Swedish delegation supported the communication presented but reiterated its requirements concerning the costs incurred by the fishing possibilities and asked for improved co-ordination with Community policies on development and aid.

Commissioner Fischler reminded the delegations that a common view was shared by the Council and the Commission on the need for the EC to have sustainable resources both in Community waters and in other seas. He also stressed the need to promote a high seas fleet in view of

the size of the EC fleet and indicated that the provisions of the Communication would promote investments, transfer of technical know-how in order to assist third countries to develop their management of fishing resources. He emphasised that shipowners' fees are considered as part of the overall financial contribution granted under a fisheries partnership agreement and must reflect a fair price for access to fishing rights.

The Communication, having noted that the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy is an essential component of this policy, proposes adjusting the agreements with third countries in order to ensure sustainable development of fisheries based on scientific data. The Commission also proposes to conduct sustainability impact assessment for the negotiation of new fisheries partnership agreements.

Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Arlindo CUNHA (EPP-ED, P) on the Commission communication. The report underlined that fisheries partnership agreements with non-EU countries - which allow the EU fleet access to the waters of those countries - provide a vital economic boost to the outlying and outermost areas of the Union, generating 30 000 direct jobs and many more indirect ones. They also help to balance the EU's deficit in fisheries products. The committee therefore called for greater efforts to be made to conclude new agreements (at present there are 22). The Commission was also asked to prepare for the budgetary consequences of the signing of a number of new agreements in the near future. The report pointed out that spending on the agreements had actually fallen from EUR 278.5 million in 1996 to less than EUR 200 million in 2003. MEPs agreed with the Commission's view that there was a need for better integration of environmental and development aspects under the agreements and insisted that, in line with the precautionary approach, the EU should not seek an agreement where stocks are "already fully exploited or in danger of over-exploitation". However, the report also pointed out that the agreements are primarily commercial, and that a "clear separation" needed to be made between compensation paid in return for access and general development aid forming part of the agreement ("targeted measures"). The Commission should draw up a "sound financial chapter" on the financing of fisheries agreements, ensuring that the cost was shared between the Community and the vessel owners in payment for fishing rights, regardless of the third country with which the agreement had been concluded. MEPs also endorsed the Commission's approach of earmarking part of the Community contribution for the development of the local fisheries industry. They added that measures should be taken to prevent coastal communities' traditional fisheries from being edged out by other, alien practices. Members also reiterated the need for much greater EP scrutiny of the agreements. Parliament should be updated on the course of negotiations and be provided with an annual report on the implementation of agreements already in place.?

Fisheries: integrated framework for partnership agreements with third countries

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Arlindo CUNHA (EPP-ED, Portugal) on the Commission's communication. (Please see the summary of 09/09/03.) Parliament welcomed the Commission proposal and insisted that agreements, although of a commercial nature, must respect sustainable development of the fishing industry of the developing country concerned. The Commission was urged to make negotiations on the renewal of fisheries partnership agreements dependent upon the presentation of satisfactory evidence that monies paid under the previous agreement for targeted measures have been spent as intended. Development cooperation policy in this field entails promoting developing countries' capacity to exploit their fishery resources, enhance local added value and obtain a fair price for access rights for EU fleets to their EEZs, while accepting the need to protect the interests of the EU's fisheries. Parliament felt that these agreements should contain measures to protect small-scale indigenous fisheries, to promote the landing of fish locally and require access to be dependent on the use of selective fishing methods. The Commission must ask that the third countries involved apply to all other nations' distant water fleets operating in their waters the same set of rules which it applies to the Community fleet, respecting the obligations committed to in multilateral agreements, in particular the fight against illegal fishing. Parliament went on to ask the Commission to inform Parliament on the negotiating mandate which the Council grants the Commission. Parliament should be supplied with annual reports on the degree of implementation of the agreements, the use of funds for targeted measures and standardised evaluation reports that should meet the requirements as laid down by the Fisheries Council of October 1997 so as to respect the Commission's accountability to Parliament. Finally the Commission is asked for aid for implementation by third countries of the FAO's international action plan for combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing one of the main priorities when concluding future agreements with third countries.?