

Sustainable management of external fishing fleets

2015/0289(COD) - 24/11/2017 - Committee recommendation tabled for plenary, 2nd reading

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the recommendation for second reading in the report by Linnaeus ENGSTRÖM (Greens/EFA, SE) on the Council position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1006/2008.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament approve, without amendment, the Council's position at first reading.

As the short justification accompanying the recommendation pointed out, the main elements of the agreement concern the following points:

Fishing activities: one of the issues widely debated by the co-legislators was the definition of fishing activities. The final compromise refers to fishing operations rather than fishing activities. Parliament has obtained provisions on prior notification and reporting of transshipments under direct authorisations and on the high seas.

Reflagging operations: vessels which, during the five-year period prior to the application for an authorisation, have left the EU register and been reflagged in a third country, and then returned to the EU register will only receive the authorisation by the flag Member State if it has verified that the vessel did not engage in illegal fishing activities (IUU), or that it has not operated in a non-cooperating country or a third country identified as allowing non-sustainable fishing.

Fishing authorisations: every EU vessel fishing beyond EU waters would be required to obtain an authorisation by its flag member state based on a set of common eligibility criteria which include: information on the vessel, its owner and the master; a valid fishing license; proof that the vessel is not on a list of illegal fishing vessels (IUU).

As regards direct authorisations, Parliament has obtained a provision obliging the operator to provide a scientific evaluation proving the sustainability of the planned fishing operations.

For high seas fishing outside RFMO (Regional Fisheries Management Organizations), a scientific assessment demonstrating the sustainability of the proposed fishery would be required.

Control and reporting rules: EU vessels fishing in third country waters under a sustainable fisheries partnership agreement would be required to provide catch and landing declarations to the third country (if so requested in the relevant agreement). Failure to comply with this obligation would be considered a serious breach of CFP rules.

Register: the Commission will maintain an electronic fishing authorisations register, for information exchange with the Member States. Part of this register would be publicly accessible, providing for the first time open access to information on the name and flag of the vessel, IMO number, target species and fishing zone.