

# Multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks

2016/0238(COD) - 29/05/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 520 votes to 131, with 9 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks and repealing Council Regulation (EC) 676/2007 and Council Regulation (EC) 1342/20081; The matter was referred back to the committee responsible for inter-institutional negotiations at the sitting of 14.9.2017.

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission proposal as follows:

**Purpose and scope:** the Regulation shall establish a multiannual plan for the following demersal stocks in Union waters of the North Sea (ICES divisions 2a, 3a and subarea 4), including the fisheries exploiting those stocks, and, where those stocks extend beyond the North Sea, in its adjacent waters.

These demersal stocks shall include roundfish, flatfish and cartilaginous fish species, Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) and Northern prawn (*Pandalus borealis*) that live at or near the bottom of the water column.

The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts adjusting the geographical distribution of stocks set out in the plan if the scientific advice provided by ICES indicates a change in the geographical distribution of the relevant stocks.

On the basis of scientific advice, the Commission may submit a proposal for the amendment of the list of stocks.

This Regulation also applies to by-catches caught in the North Sea when fishing for the stocks listed in the plan.

**Objective of the plan:** the amended text specified the objectives of the plan, namely:

- contribute to achieving the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and in particular to achieving and maintaining the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for the stocks concerned, by implementing the landing obligation for the species which are subject to catch limits;
- promote a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities, taking into account coastal fishing and socio-economic aspects;
- implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.

The plan also specifies details for the implementation of the landing obligation in Union waters of the North Sea for all stocks of species to which the landing obligation applies.

The measures taken under the plan should be based on the best available scientific advice.

**Fishing opportunities:** the new rules shall determine the ranges (minimum-maximum) within which total allowable catches (TACs) and annual quotas would be set. Fishing opportunities shall in any event be fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5 % probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B<sub>lim</sub>.

When allocating fishing opportunities available to them, Member States shall take account of the likely catch composition of vessels participating in mixed fisheries.

When scientific advice indicates that recreational fisheries have a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a particular stock, the Council shall take them into account and may limit recreational fisheries when fixing fishing opportunities in order to avoid exceeding the total target of fishing mortality.

**Safeguard measures:** the amended text provides for the possibility to avoid and/or reduce fishing for a particular stock if scientific advice indicates that a stock is threatened. Remedial measures shall be selected taking into account the nature, seriousness, duration and repetition of the situation where the spawning stock biomass.

**Technical measures:** the Commission may adopt delegated acts to supplement the Regulation as regards:

- specifications of characteristics of fishing gears and rules governing their use in order to ensure or improve selectivity, reduce unwanted catches or minimise negative impacts on the ecosystem;
- limitations or prohibitions on the use of certain fishing gears and fishing activities in certain areas or during certain periods;
- the fixing of minimum conservation reference sizes for any stock to which the Regulation applies in order to ensure the protection of juveniles of marine organisms.

**Cooperation with third countries:** where stocks of common interest are also exploited by third countries, the Union should engage with those third countries with a view to ensuring that those stocks are managed in a sustainable manner. Where no formal agreement is reached, the Union should make every effort to reach common arrangements for fishing of such stocks with a view to making sustainable management possible, thereby promoting a level-playing field for Union operators.