

ALDE background notes:



THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY [\[FR\]](#)

The EU fishing industry is the second largest in the world. The EU is the largest world market and the leading importer of fisheries products, and it also possesses the world's largest maritime territory.

I. 'Blue' Europe

The European Union has created a fully-fledged **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** which sets standards for the fishing industry. Its common rules include the principle of accountability, which makes fishers accountable for the pollution that they have caused (the 'polluter pays' principle) as well as the protection of juvenile stock by prohibiting or restricting certain fishing techniques and inspecting fish sizes.

History of the CFP

Articles 32 to 39 of the Treaty of Rome include fisheries policy in the Common Agricultural Policy. The first regulations on fisheries were adopted at the beginning of the **1970s**: the right to fish in the waters of another Member State, Community aid for the modernisation of the fisheries sector, and the common organisation of the markets. These initial common standards were changed in 1973, with the accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, whose catches were double those of the six founding Member States. From then on, freedom of access to coastal waters was suspended for ten years.

It was **not until 1983 that fisheries policy became a fully-fledged Community policy**. It was Regulation No 170/83 of 25 January 1983 which actually created a Community regime for fisheries and aquaculture. It established the concept of stability for fish stocks, and laid down conservation and management measures based on total allowable catches (TACs). With the accession of Spain and Portugal in 1986, fishing capacity increased by 75% and the number of fishermen in the Community almost doubled. As in 1973, transitional measures were introduced for the two countries concerned, for a period of ten years.

The first **change of direction for the CFP** took place in 1992. The aim of Regulation No 3760/92 was to adjust the size of the fleet to meet the requirements of resources management. It therefore makes provision for a reduction in the Community fishing fleet, accompanied by structural measures to limit the social impact of that reduction.

Reform continued in 2002 with a view to providing a solution to the discovery that fishery resources were being destroyed and fish stocks reduced. The reform was based



on two main cornerstones: resources management and the funding of investments in the fishing fleet. The resources management side involved the establishment of recovery plans for stocks which were most at risk, while other stocks were governed by TACs and quotas set by multi-annual management plans. In addition, a control system was introduced which was more rigorous and involved more cooperation between Member States. As for funding, the 2002 reform was a major turning point. Public aid for the building of new vessels was abolished with effect from 2005, while aid for modernisation continued to be available, provided that it was not used to fund investment which would result in an increase in fishing capacity.

In 2009 the Commission launched a **wide-ranging debate** on fisheries management in the European Union. A report on this consultation exercise is due in March.

The main themes of the CFP

The CFP is based on four main aspects:

- **Resources management:** this aspect is based on the principle of opening up access to waters and resources, within the framework of total allowable catches which impose a quantitative restriction, fishing effort management which limits the time for which vessels are at sea, and various control measures. It was on the basis of this aspect that it was decided, in particular, that there should be free access for all European fishing vessels from 12 to 200 miles from Europe's coasts.

- **Structural measures:** financing measures of a structural nature are introduced on the basis of a multi-annual plan. Their objective is to contribute to the sustainable economic development of the fishing and aquaculture industries by encouraging the modernisation and adaptation of the fishing fleet to match the available fish resources. These measures are cofinanced by the Community via the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance.

- **Product marketing:** the European Union has set up a common organisation of the markets in fishery products. This common organisation is aimed at stabilising the market, supporting fishermen's incomes and ensuring a regular supply of quality products. In order to achieve this aim, common marketing standards have been adopted, covering the size, packaging and labelling of products. The EU has also set a minimum selling price per species, and is establishing a single trade regime with third countries, based on the Common Customs Tariff. For all these measures, the relevant producer organisations are the preferred intermediaries, and they have a whole range of instruments at their disposal to stabilise and regulate the market.

- **External aspect:** negotiations with third countries play an important part in the CFP, because more than a quarter of EU catches come from outside Community waters. In addition to partnership agreements with third countries, the European Union maintains a presence within international organisations, both general and specialised, and within regional fisheries organisations.

Specific bodies

The **Community Fisheries Control Agency**, created in 2005, has the job of



coordinating those measures which are intended to ensure the uniform and effective implementation of the CFP. This task consists mainly of pooling Community and national resources for controlling fishing activities and monitoring resources. It also covers the coordination of enforcement measures.

The **Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture** is a body within which the Commission and the national fishing-industry representatives meet at regular intervals to discuss developments in the CFP.

Financing

The CFP is financed via the **European Fisheries Fund**. For the current financial framework (2007-2013), this fund was given a total budget of EUR 3.8 billion. Its purpose is to finance measures with the following objectives:

- strengthening the economic competitiveness and the viability of operators in the sector;
- ensuring a stable balance between the available resources and the capacity of the European fishing fleet;
- fostering the sustainable development of fishing areas and the use of environmentally-friendly fishing and production methods;
- providing adequate support to people employed in the fisheries sector.

II. ALDE and the CFP

Community Fisheries Control Agency

In 2005 **Elsbeth Attwooll** (LibDem, United Kingdom), who at the time was the ALDE coordinator within the EP's Committee on Fisheries, said: *'The new agency is an important contribution to ensuring that rules introduced at the EU level are implemented effectively across the EU. Crucially, one of the arguments that fishermen use for breaking rules is that they are not applied properly elsewhere. With an agency charged by the Member States and the European Commission with coordinating the control and inspection activities of Member States, such allegations and irregularities should become a thing of the past.'*

Resources management

In 2008 **Neils Busk** (Venstre, Denmark), now retired from Parliament, gave his verdict on the measures aimed at ensuring the recovery of cod stocks: *'From a purely biological viewpoint, the best method of promoting a swift recovery of cod stocks would be to completely prohibit all fisheries where there is a risk of catching cod until the species has recovered. However, such an approach would have enormous social and economic implications as cod is caught in mixed fisheries, which would also mean banning fishing for other species, including haddock, whiting, Norway lobster, plaice, sole, angler, megrim, etc. To avoid ending up in such a situation, the recovery plan must produce visible results.'*

For more information:

[ALDE press releases on the CFP](#)

[Commission: DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries](#)



[Parliament: Committee on Fisheries](#)

