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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

on progress

towards and outlook for the common fisheries system in the Mediterranean

Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on progress towards and outlook for the common fisheries system in the Mediterranean

1. INTRODUCTION

When the texts that form the basis of the common fisheries policy in the EC were adopted in 1983, it was decided not to include the Mediterranean for the time being in the aspects relating to the conservation and management of fishery resources, in view of the special features of the fishery sector in the area.

The introduction of a fisheries policy for the Mediterranean should thus be designed in such a way that the policy can be brought into operation smoothly and progressively, as provided for in the discussion paper presented by the Commission in July 1990.¹

At present, fisheries policy in the Mediterranean is also part of the overall cooperation policy introduced for the region by the Commission, the next major event in which will be the Euro-Mediterranean diplomatic conference to be held in Barcelona at the end of 1995.

With this in mind, a set of measures have been undertaken in various fields described below.

2. HARMONIZATION OF TECHNICAL MEASURES AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

The first stage in this undertaking was to concentrate on rationalization of Community fisheries. After the discussion paper mentioned above, and exchanges of views on this matter at the Council, the Commission began work including in particular a comparative study of national laws in the four Member States concerned, with a view to harmonizing them at Community level; the results of this study are given in the Commission communication to the Council of 12 February 1992.²

A proposal for a Regulation to harmonize certain technical measures was sent to the Council in December 1992.³

After lengthy discussions in the Council, an agreement in principle was reached on 10 June 1994 on the wording of the Regulation, which was formally adopted on 27 June.⁴

¹ Commission of the European Communities, SEC (90) 1136 final, 10 July 1990, "Outline of a common fisheries system in the Mediterranean: discussion paper."

² Commission of the European Communities, SEC (92) 183 final of 12 February 1992 "Commission communication to the Council on the progress made since presentation of the discussion paper on the outline of a common fisheries system in the Mediterranean."

³ OJ C 5, 9.1.1993.

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1626/94 of 27 June 1994 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (OJ L 171, 6.7.1994).

This Regulation, which entered into force on 1 January 1995, is a first step towards the introduction of a common policy for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Mediterranean. In particular, it includes specific provision for:

- prohibiting gear which, when used in the Mediterranean, contributes excessively to the degradation of the marine environment or to the running-down of certain stocks;
- defining minimum mesh sizes for the main types of fishing gear used in the Mediterranean, and minimum sizes for certain species of fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other fishery products specific to the Mediterranean in order to ensure reproduction and thus avoid overfishing;
- reserving part of the coastal zone for the most selective gear used by small-scale fishermen;
- protecting certain zones where juveniles congregate, taking account of the local biological conditions in these various zones.

The Regulation provides for adjustment periods of varying length (the longest coming to an end in 2002) for particularly sensitive activities at present legal under national legislation.

The application of the Regulation should be monitored and assessed in close cooperation with the Member States concerned, so that the specific problems it entails for fishermen can be examined and taken into account, for any measure to reinforce arrangements for the conservation of resources imposes further constraints on the exercise of their activities, while the benefits of the measure emerge only in the longer term. It has been brought to the Commission's attention that the application of certain of the measures provided for in the Regulation raises difficulties for Italian fishermen, in particular in the Adriatic. Meetings have been arranged at various levels to consider the problems, and possible measures to deal with them.

3. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

A. Background

The 1990 discussion paper saw cooperation between Mediterranean coastal States as a possible second stage in setting up a comprehensive policy for conservation and rational management of resources in the Mediterranean.

In this framework, the Commission has been in regular contact with several Mediterranean countries to find out their views on the problems in the region, so as to set in train discussions on the system of international cooperation provided for in the above-mentioned paper.

Among the suggestions made in that paper was the idea of a diplomatic conference comprising all countries with a Mediterranean coastline.

To this end, consultations with non-Community countries began in 1991. Technical consultations have been held with Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Israel, Turkey, Syria and Egypt. All these countries support the Commission's initiative.

In the context of international cooperation, a seminar was organized by the Commission at Palma de Mallorca in 1993 with scientists and officials from the Community, from some of the countries that fish in the Mediterranean, and from international organizations involved in managing Mediterranean resources. The purpose of the seminar was to analyse technical measures applicable to the management of shared stocks in the Mediterranean.

All the participants recognized the value of a harmonized approach to this matter.

B. Diplomatic conference on the management of fishery resources in the Mediterranean

The consultation process described above eventually led to a diplomatic conference, organized by the Commission, on the management of fishery resources in the Mediterranean; it was held in Crete in December 1994. The purpose of the conference was to prepare the basis for concertation between the Union and the coastal States of the Mediterranean and States whose nationals fish in that sea.

The rate of participation was very high. Most of the participants were Member States,⁵ States, whether or not Mediterranean coastal States, whose nationals are involved in fishing in the Mediterranean,⁶ the FAO, the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM), non-governmental organizations,⁷ and occupational organizations, in particular Europêche (Association of National Organisations of Fishing Enterprises in the EC), as well as scientific experts and advisers.

The participants adopted a solemn declaration on the conservation and management of the fishery resources of the Mediterranean, under which all States which benefit, in whatever capacity, from the biological wealth of the Mediterranean marine environment, share in the duty to ensure that its fishery resources are preserved and developed.

The objective of this cooperation is to set up a system of conservation and management, harmonized at Mediterranean level, on the basis of the best available scientific advice and the most beneficial existing practices, with the purpose of ensuring effective protection for the fishery resources of the Mediterranean and their rational exploitation under the most favourable circumstances.

The declaration calls on the states concerned to examine the legal instruments and other measures to be implemented in order to ensure conservation of resources. It is planned to continue periodic contacts with the various countries, with a view to holding another diplomatic conference on the management of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean in 1996, so as to confirm concrete measures on the subject.

⁵ Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Austria.

⁶ Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malta, Morocco, Palestine National Authority, Slovenia, Turkey.

⁷ Greenpeace, WWF, EBCD.

C. Strengthening the GFCM

The participants in the Crete conference expressed interest in reinforcing international cooperation within existing organizations responsible for conservation and management of resources in the Mediterranean.

The General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM), a regional FAO organization in which the EC has so far participated as an observer, was considered the most appropriate structure for the achievement of this objective.

But if the GFCM is to take a more active role once more, the Community must join as a full member; this is appropriate in view of the Community's membership of the FAO. The Commission's initial recommendation⁸ for opening Community membership negotiations with the GFCM was not followed up, because the four Mediterranean Member States did not wish to withdraw. This was seen as a problem in the light of experience in the FAO, where the Community and the Member States must deposit declarations of their respective competence for each meeting, an obligation that considerably hampers the effectiveness of the Community's work within the organization. This type of situation should not be reproduced.

The Commission is prepared to agree that, in view of the wide-ranging scope of the GFCM's activities, the continued presence of the Member States alongside the Community is justified. However, as matters of national competence will not be dealt with very frequently in its meetings, it might be possible, to avoid a situation like that in the FAO, to arrange that the Community's exclusive competence should be presumed at meetings unless national or mixed competence were explicitly specified for a given agenda item. This approach would take account of the specific features of fisheries organizations and of the Community's exclusive competence for fisheries policy, while protecting the interests of the Member States concerned, enabling them to continue as members of the GFCM without setting up a formalistic system for the preparation of meetings like that at the FAO, which creates continual controversy.

The aim is to enable the EC to become a member of the GFCM at the next plenary session, in May 1995. Although that is very soon, the time and situation now seem ripe for re-opening the question, for if no decision is taken now within the Community, membership of the GFCM will have to be postponed until 1997, when the GFCM next meets in plenary session; such delay could have adverse effects on the development of the policy of cooperation in the Mediterranean.

The Commission will amend its 1993 recommendation accordingly, and present a working paper with a view to resuming discussions in the Council on membership of the GFCM.

It is also planned to call a meeting with the members of the GFCM to prepare the next plenary session of May 1995.

To meet this deadline will require diligent and committed work on the part of all the Community institutions.

⁸ SEC (93) 258 final, 23 February 1993.

D. Other measures

- **The Greek authorities have floated the idea of holding an ad hoc meeting in Crete of experts to examine matters relating to scientific cooperation and coordination of research and gathering of data in the Mediterranean region. this meeting could be the first stage in reinforcing cooperation in these areas, with a view to creating a scientific observatory including all the Mediterranean States.**
- **The EC financed a meeting of experts (organized by the GFCM in Malta from 6 to 8 March 1995) with the purpose of examining the implementation of the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas**
- **Against this background of cooperation, a meeting was held in Brussels on 7 February 1995 with the Mediterranean coastal States to consider the text by the President of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.**

4. PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The professional organisations of fishermen (EUROPÊCHE/COGECA) have pressed for a common regime for fisheries in the Mediterranean for a long time.

The Commission has been careful, since the beginning of the preparation of its proposals, to maintain a dialogue with the representatives of the professional fishermen, chiefly through the Advisory Committee on Fisheries, but also by direct consultation with the professional organisations of the countries concerned.

A. The Advisory Committee on Fisheries

A special "ad hoc" working group of the Committee, consisting entirely of representatives of the Mediterranean fishing industry, was formed in 1991 to consider the question, and held its preparatory meeting on 13 May of that year. The Group's attitude was always positive towards the principle of the introduction of conservation measures for the Mediterranean fisheries. After several meetings it produced a series of suggestions for the improvement of the Commission's proposal.

After the adoption of the proposal by Council, the Committee adopted an opinion (July 1994) which was not entirely favorable, chiefly on the grounds that the observations made through the working group had not been included. An opinion presented by EUROPÊCHE/COGECA entirely supported this position; indeed it was to all intents identical.

Observers from the ACF were present at the Diplomatic Conference held in Crete. The Committee has pressed the Commission to organise a meeting of the professional organisations of fishermen of both Community Member States and third countries to discuss the problems of conservation and management of stocks in the Mediterranean.

A meeting of the "Mediterranean" working group as well as the plenary session of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries have been held on 1 and 9 March 1995, including in their respective agenda the examination of the resource management policy in the Mediterranean.

B. Direct consultation with the professional organisations

It was realised by the Commission at a very early stage that the professional organisations of fishermen in the Mediterranean exercised considerable powers in the management of resources in their own areas. The studies made by the Commission in the course of preparing its proposal included the collection directly from these professional organisations of their own rules and regulations, along with their comments and descriptions of their operations. This work was described in the report made to the Council March 1992.

5. MULTIANNUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAMMES (MAGPs)

A. Community background and application to the Mediterranean

In view of the excess production capacity of a large part of the Community fleet, the Commission first decided in 1983, by virtue of its exclusive competence in matters of fishery resources management in Community waters, to adopt measures to adjust fishing efforts. This is the origin of the Multiannual Guidance Programmes (MAGPs) intended to ensure compliance in the medium term by each Member State concerned, and by each segment of the fleet, with ceilings expressed in terms of fleet capacity: engine power (in kW) and tonnage (in GT). Up to 45% of the objective may be reached by reductions in activity. Programmes are national, and vessels using static gear are exempt from the capacity reductions prescribed by the Union, since the capacity measurements do not accurately reflect the fishing effort of the vessels. Measures to reduce the effort of vessels using such gear have been or will be adopted in the framework of technical rules.

The third-generation MAGPs (MAGP III) set targets for the reduction of fishing efforts in the period 1992-95 of 20%, 15% and 0% respectively for demersal, benthic and pelagic stocks.

In view of the available information on the state of resources in the Mediterranean, the Union has been led to adopt measures to adjust fishing efforts equivalent in scope to those recommended for the multiannual guidance programmes as a whole.

B. Features of the MAGPs applicable in the Mediterranean

The Member States' fleets operating in the Mediterranean represent 2.7 million kW (accounting for 22% of the total engine power of the Community fleet) and 423 000 GT (32% of the total tonnage). Vessels using static gear represent two thirds of installed capacity.

Consequently, the impact of multiannual guidance programmes in terms of the reduction in overcapacity will be halved in the Mediterranean in comparison with other Community seas (5% instead of 10%).

6. STRUCTURAL MEASURES

A. General remarks

Community structural measures in the fisheries sector, which were introduced over twelve years ago, have been included since 1 January 1994 in the general arrangements for the Structural Funds,⁹ supplemented by the specific rules of the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG).¹⁰ Moreover, socio-economic measures to back up the restructuring of the fishing industry can be taken in the context of the territorial objectives of the Structural Funds,¹¹ or under the PESCA Community initiative.¹²

The basic Structural Fund rules, including specific FIFG rules and the accompanying measures, do not provide for any special conditions for the Mediterranean regions. However, many of them are covered by Objective 1,¹³ which entitles them to preferential status (higher rates of Community aid, higher level and concentration of financial resources).

B. Situation by country

The programming of structural operations depends on whether the regions concerned are eligible under Objective 1 of the Structural Funds. Thus while there is only one fisheries programme for Greece, the other three coastal States of the Mediterranean have two separate programmes (one for the Objective 1 regions, and one for the other regions). Programming does not distinguish between the various maritime ranges, so that it is not possible to calculate financial data specifically for the Mediterranean aspects of the Spanish programmes or the continental mainland programme for France. The Mediterranean percentage of the total of each programme can be very roughly estimated as follows: Spain Objective 1 (Andalusia, Ceuta and Melilla, Murcia, Valencia): 10%; Spain other than Objective 1 (Catalonia, Balearic Islands): 20%; France (Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur): 15%.

⁹ Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 of 24 June 1988 amended by Regulation (EEC) NO 2081/93 of 20 July 1993 - "Framework Regulation" - and Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88 of 19 December 1988 amended by Regulation (EEC) No 2082/93 of 20 July 1993 - "Coordination Regulation" (OJ L 193, 31.7.1993).

¹⁰ Regulation (EEC) No 2080/93 of 20 July 1993 (OJ L 193, 31.7.1993) and Regulation (EC) No 3699/93 of 21 December 1993 (OJ L 346, 31.12.1993).

¹¹ Objective 1: development and structural adjustment of the regions whose development is lagging behind; Objective 2: converting the regions seriously affected by industrial decline; Objective 5(b): rural development. In 1993 the impact of restructuring of the fisheries sector was introduced as an explicit criterion of eligibility for Objectives 2 and 5(b).

¹² Article 11 of Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88; Commission Communication to the Member States (OJ C 180, 1.7.1994).

¹³ Spain, except Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, Corsica; the Italian Mezzogiorno; all of Greece.

The following table summarizes financial data for the various programmes approved in December 1994 (in million ecus at 1994 prices):

Member State	total	State aid						private
		total	European Union				MS	
			total	FIFG	ERDF	BSF		
GR	311.7	200.0	150.0	130.0	20.0	-	50.0	111.7
ES Obj.1*	2158.5	1354.5	995.0	995.0	-	-	359.5	803.9
FR Obj.1 (Corsica)	381.8	201.6	119.6	119.6	-	-	82.0	180.2
FR other than Obj.1*	17.8	13.4	7.5	7.5	-	-	5.9	4.3
IT Obj.1	842.7	334.7	190.0	190.0	-	-	144.7	508.0
IT other than Obj.1	584.4	487.1	257.4	233.0	-	24.4	229.7	97.3
	456.4	298.2	134.4	134.4	-	-	163.8	158.2

* these amounts relate to the total operational programme: Atlantic seaboard + Mediterranean seaboard.

Under the PESCA Community initiative, two programmes, Greece and Spain, were approved in December 1994, and two others, France and Italy, are still under negotiation. By regionalizing the programmes into regional sub-programmes, the financing allocated to each maritime range can be specified.

Member State (*)	total	State aid						private
		total	European Union				MS	
			total	FIFG	ERDF	BSF		
GR	54.5	36.9	27.1	8.5	18.2	0.3	9.8	17.7
ES	12.9	10.7	5.6	5.6	-	-	5.1	2.6
FR (**)	11.5	4.9	3.4	1.1	-	2.3	1.4	6.6
IT (**)	82.5	57.6	34.2	6.3	26.5	1.4	23.4	24.8

(*) Mediterranean seaboard only; provisional estimate for France

(**) Million ecus at 1995 prices

7. STUDIES AND PILOT PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE COMMUNITY

A. Background

In 1991 the European Parliament put at the Commission's disposal a budget heading granting ECU 5 million for 1991 and 1992 and ECU 3 million for 1993, to finance studies and pilot projects to encourage the establishment of a common policy for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Mediterranean. The arrangements for implementing the budget resources were set out in Regulation (EEC) No 3499/91.¹⁴

The budget line set aside for specific measures in the Mediterranean disappeared in 1994. However, studies can still be financed from budget resources, in particular for biological and technical analyses in support of the Common fisheries policy.

B. Review

To begin with, studies and projects to be financed were identified on the basis of calls for proposals published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. These calls led to major resources being devoted to fisheries research in the Mediterranean. Not only was a contribution made to financing the construction of a specialized research vessel, but also, and especially, research could be carried out into the biological aspects of fisheries, including:

- the identification and evaluation of stocks of the main species of commercial interest, in particular through experimental trawling surveys using procedures harmonized between the four Member States, for demersal species; particular attention was paid to specialized fishing in international Mediterranean waters, particularly sponge fishing and fishing for migratory high-seas species (swordfish, bluefin tuna);
- the selectivity of fishing methods and equipment, which enabled estimates to be made of catches of juveniles of commercial species, or of accessory catches of species with no commercial value; in certain cases, it was even possible to test ways of reducing these catches;
- the impact of certain fishing activities on marine ecosystems.

The budget resources also enabled studies to be financed into the socio-economic aspects of Mediterranean fisheries, in particular:

- mapping of the fisheries frequented by different fleets;
- the role of the professional organizations in the management of fisheries;
- the way the various types of fisheries management measures were perceived by fishermen.

¹⁴ Regulation (EEC) No 3499/91 of 28 November 1991 providing a Community framework for studies and pilot projects relating to the conservation and management of fishery resources in the Mediterranean (OJ L 331, 3.12.1991).

They also made it possible to finance:

- work into improving systems of statistical data-gathering, both on biological magnitudes and socio-economic variables;
- various working parties dealing with the harmonization of investigation methods and the standardization of data bases;
- several seminars and conferences devoted either to promoting fisheries research in the Mediterranean, or to the analysis of technical measures for the management of shared stocks in the Mediterranean.

The following table shows the number of projects financed by year, and the state of work on 15 February 1995.

Year	Accepted	Concluded	In progress	Budget
1991	19	10	9	ECU 5 million
1992	24	10	14	ECU 5 million
1993	25	6	19	ECU 3 million
1994	21	0	21	ECU 3.2 million
TOTAL	89	26	63	ECU 16.2 million

The creation of a specific budget heading for studies of Mediterranean fisheries resources has meant that for three years, research structures operating in the Mediterranean have been given some measure of protection. This was all the more desirable as fisheries research in the Mediterranean had been, until the fairly recent past, less active or less attentive to conservation and management than that in other Community waters. The phasing out of financing for studies in the Mediterranean meant the end of this protection. Research structures in the Mediterranean were thus subject to competition, leading to emulation and of collaboration with scientific teams used to working in other regions.

C. Outlook

The table above suggests that the level of financing granted for biological studies in the Mediterranean has stabilized, despite the disappearance of the specific budgetary heading for these studies, and the protection it afforded. Moreover, the resources available for support to studies of socio-economic aspects and innovative fisheries research should be added.

However, these means do not suffice to support research and study work by third country bodies, although the implementation of an efficient policy of fisheries management in the Mediterranean requires that work on assessing and monitoring stock that is shared or exploited in common should be supported.

8. MONITORING FISHERIES ACTIVITIES

The success of the common fisheries policy depends upon the application of efficient arrangements for monitoring all aspects of that policy.

On 12 October 1993, the Council adopted Regulation 2847/93 establishing a control system applicable to the common fisheries policy. However, while the policy was incompletely applied in the Mediterranean, it was difficult to apply the Regulation fully. Consequently, the Regulation provides that certain measures laid down (logbooks, landing declarations, validation system) would apply to fishing in the Mediterranean only from 1999.

The specific features of fishing in the region and the lack of adequate infrastructure are determining factors in establishing an efficient system of controlling fisheries. For these reasons, the introduction of the system in the Mediterranean should be conceived in the framework of an exchange of views with the Member States concerned, to examine possible measures to be taken, with as a background coordination with the non-Member countries of the Mediterranean seaboard to ensure efficient management over the whole region.

Situation of the fleet of the European Union in the Mediterranean on 15 January 1995

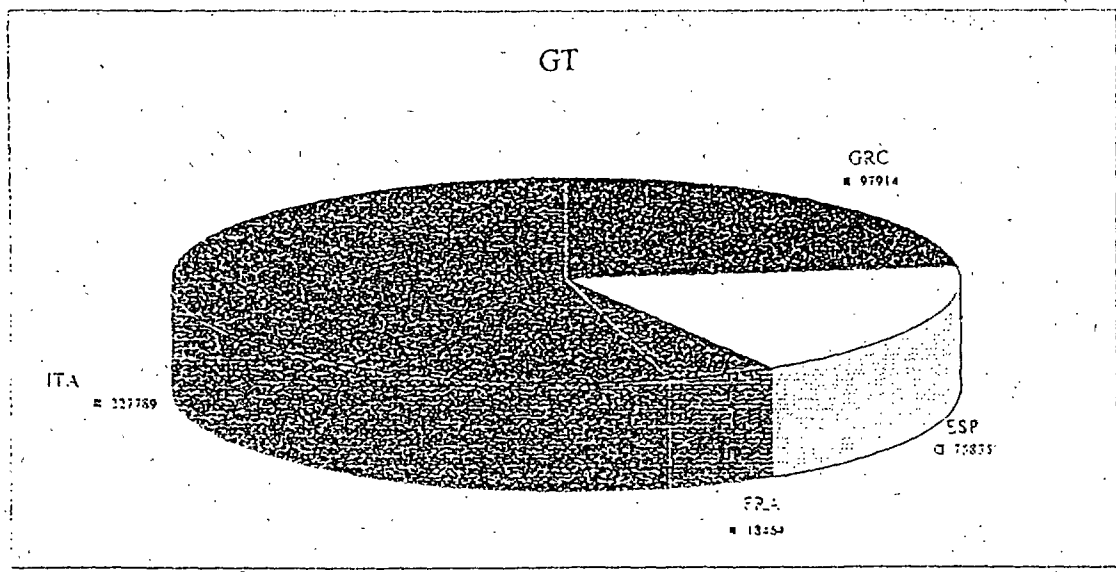
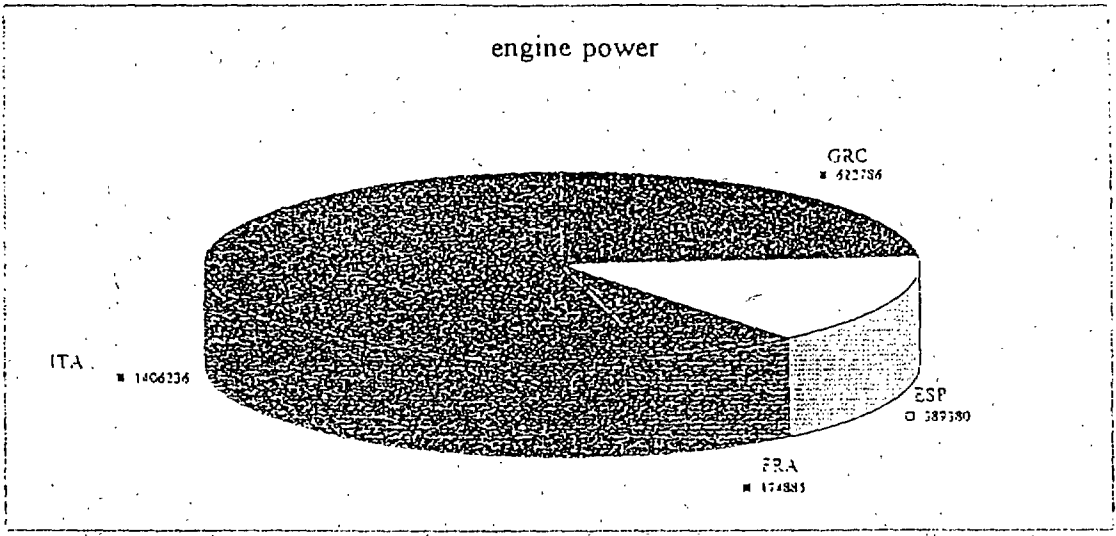


Table II

Situation on 15 January 1995 of Community fleet in the Mediterranean (MAGP III)

	Trawlers			Other than trawlers			Total		
	Number	GT	kW	Number	GT	kW	Number	GT	kW
Greece	353	24 692	103 620	19 930	73 222	519 166	20 283	97 914	622 786
Spain	1 371	53 575	242 702	3 487	22 260	146 678	4 858	75 835	389 380
France	178	8 546	49 707	1 949	9 918	125 178	2 127	18 464	174 885
Italy	1 849	86 479	380 024	13 587	141 310	1 026 212	15 436	227 789	1 406 236
Total Medit.	3 398	173 292	776 053	19 023	173 488	1 298 068	42 704	420 002	2 593 287

* Data for France and Spain are estimates based on data from the fishing vessel register of the Community.

Table III

Situation of the fleets of Member States fishing in the Mediterranean in relation to objectives of MAGP III

	Situation of fleets on 1/1/92		1996 objectives of MAGP III		Reductions in fishing efforts 1992-96			
	kW	GT	kW	GT	kW	%	GT	%
Greece	652 818	95 105	620 166	94 831	32 652	5.0	274	0.3
Spain	338 250	65 460	303 441	59 105	34 809	10.3	6 355	9.7
France	176 539	17 621	164 331	16 860	12 208	6.9	761	4.3
Italy	1 471 610	233 886	1 406 614	219 186	64 996	4.4	14 700	6.3
Total Medit.	2 639 217	412 072	2 494 552	389 982	144 665	5.5	22 090	5.4

* Data for France and Spain are estimates based on data from the fishing vessel register of the Community.

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