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Structural Fund revision

Within the context of a reflection paper entitled "Agenda 2000", the Commission has had the opportunity of detailing its policy for the beginning of the 21st century as regards reducing disparities in development between regions of the Union and structural adjustment. It has thus defined a number of priorities making it possible to guarantee continuing the economic and social cohesion effort within the framework of a new period of budgetary programming taking account of the requirements of candidate countries for future membership.

To satisfy these ambitions, it will, above all, be necessary to increase the efficiency of structural actions (in the area of fishing and aquaculture, involving actions concerning fleet, ports, fish markets, processing industries, etc.). For this reason, the Commission has proposed a new reform for financing these measures for the period 2000-2006.

This revision would favour actions according to region rather than sector. It would also include a reduction in the number of Community initiatives. Their number would be limited from 13 to 3: cooperation between European regions, rural development and human resources. Thus, among others, the Pesca initiative would not be renewed. However, it should be emphasized that the majority of the regions eligible for Pesca would be, in such an event, included in the list of regions under "objective 2", i.e. regions facing economic and social reconversion problems. They may, in this respect, continue to benefit from actions of the four European Structural Funds (FIFG, ERDF, EAGGF, ESF).

With regard to the regions under objective 1, i.e. regions said to be "less developed" (to which the "extremely remote areas" would be added), they will continue to be the subject of a priority action for the four aforementioned funds, conveying the concern for continuing the aim of reducing regional disparities within the EU. Finally, a new objective 3 will involve all actions to favour employment.

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Region of the month

THESSALONICA: a forum for seafood products in Macedonia

The Bay of Thessalonica in Macedonia, is the confluence of a number of rivers which have contributed to its wealth. Extended by a continental shelf, it constitutes one of Greece's major landing and seafood-product processing centres.

Nevertheless, fishermen no longer fish in the bay head housing the capital of Macedonia, which is also Greece's second largest town (over 1 500 000 inhabitants). Pollution has driven them to fish in the open sea, which, however, offers fewer and fewer fishing opportunities. Trawlers, making up the best part of the industrial fleet, can only fish above the continental shelf. In the north of the Aegean Sea, depths of less than 200 m occupy a relatively significant area for the Mediterranean, but prohibition on fishing within two nautical miles (or three when the seabed is at less than 50 m) and the obligation only to sail through seal-protection areas around certain islands does limit their space.

New reductions in the fishing effort are badly perceived by the trawl-net fishermen here. Representatives of the «Agia Paraskevi» cooperative underline the fact that they approve of the introduction of permits (some of them are even of the opinion that these measures are too late in coming). Furthermore, they were the first to limit their activity in the past. In fact, trawlermen are only authorized to work eight months of the year. During the four summer months, they stop all activity or, for a minority, convert to small deep-sea fishing with seine nets. For them, limiting their fishing time further will penalize them as compared to their Italian neighbours. They deplore the continuing activity of vessels from bordering countries in the international zones of the Aegean Sea which, in the absence of the EEZ, starts at 6 nautical miles off the coast.

In Greece, Community decisions concerning the liberalization of markets put an end to price regulation which used to impose a limit of 20 % on the profit margins of wholesale merchant fishermen. Producers believe that they have not benefited from increases in selling prices which, despite their fears, did not prevent a major increase in the consumption of seafood products in Greece.

One of the new events which they consider positive is the transfer of the fish market from the centre of Thessalonica to Nea Michaniona, the main trawler base, 30 km from the former site. On the other hand, this one-and-a-half-year-old change does not at all satisfy the wholesale fish merchants who had a project for a large fresh-fish terminal north-west of Thessalonica, in the vicinity of the main communication routes. The new installations have an electronic bidding system, the first of its kind in Greece. However, to date, producers and wholesale fish merchants, whose relations are, in general, not harmonious, do not use it and remain loyal to the traditional voice system.

Questions put to Yannis Giarenis, Wholesale Fish Merchant in Thessalonica.

Pesca-Info (P.I.): Can you briefly describe your business?

Yannis Giarenis (Y.G.): Our company buys products landed here and throughout Greece. We import sole, dabs and mackerel, etc. from all over the world, and especially from the EU. We sell on site and export to the EU, which is a market we would like to see develop.

P.I.: How do you see the region's future in the field of seafood products?

Y.G.: As wholesale fish merchants, we consider the choice of location for the fish market in Nea Michaniona (in a confined space, away from the main routes) to be detrimental to the development of the region which will become a local market. We have good products here and to export them to the rest of the EU we need installations in accordance with standards, adapted to market constraints. We are also targeting the Balkans. In Michaniona we are isolated, lack space and cannot develop. The present installations make it impossible for us to satisfy the ambition we had for Thessalonica which is the heart of the whole of northern Greece, and could become a very important centre in the seafood-product trade.

Data sheet

Thessalonica

- *Location:* Central Macedonia, Greece
- *Type of fishing:* deep-sea trawling, seine net, long lines, gill nets
- *Fishing grounds:* Aegean Sea
- *Fleet:* 1 110 vessels, including 55 trawlers
- *Catches (1996):*
 - *species:* various, including - demersal species: hake, scampi, prawns, mullet - small deep-sea fish: anchovy, sardines - large deep-sea fish: swordfish
 - *volume:* 14 500 tonnes sold on the fish market plus approximately 5 000 tonnes landed outside the market
 - *value:* 10 200 000 000 Drachma (**ECU 32 000 000**)
- *Number of fishermen:* 2 400, including 400 on the trawlers
- *Jobs in processing:* 286 permanent and 70 seasonal.

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Common Fisheries Policy

International fishing conventions

As with fishing agreements (Pesca Info No 4), it is the European Union and not the Member States which is competent to negotiate at an international level with regard to fishing. Thus, it is involved in various organizations responsible for cooperation between states as regards the operation of deep-sea biological resources. These international conventions generally create commissions which organize, collect and publish the results of scientific research. Depending on the data collected they must recommend measures for managing the stocks concerned.

There are different kinds of management measures:

- limitation of the quantities taken in accordance with two method types: the setting-up of a global or state contingent (with quota);
- the introduction of prohibited zones or periods;
- prohibition on, or regulations concerning, the use of fishing gear;
- monitoring fishing effort.

The announcement of Exclusive Economic Zones by a number of coastal states has come to upset the commissions created by these conventions. In the zone where a convention applies, a distinction is now made between the deep sea, where the international organization alone is competent, and the areas under national jurisdiction where decision-making power lies with the state for deciding how recommendations will be followed up.

The EU participates in these organizations in two different ways, either as a member or as an observer.

Thus the EU is a member of:

- NAFO: North-West Atlantic Fisheries Organization;
- NEAFC: North-East Atlantic Fisheries Convention;
- NASCO: North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization;
- IBSCF: International Baltic Sea Convention on Fisheries and the conservation of living resources;
- IOTC: Indian Ocean Tuna Commission;
- CCAMLR: Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources;

The GFCM: in October 1997 the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean adopted amendments enabling the EU to take up membership in the near future.

The EU will become a member of the ICCAT or International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna from November 1997.

On the other hand, the EU only has observer status in a number of other conventions including:

- IWC: International Whaling Commission;
- NAMCO: North Atlantic Marine mammal Commission.





PESCA on the spot

The «Seafront» in Zeebrugge

The report conducted on Zeebrugge («Region of the month» in Pesca Info No 3), mentioned a marine museum occupying the dock lined by the former fish market. The old «Minque» was still in ruins at the beginning of November 1996. Since then it has been transformed into a museum, alongside a light ship, submarine and old yachts in the dock.

In its entirety it forms a veritable maritime amusement park under the name of «Seafront» and was opened at the end of June 1997. It includes games and cultural aspects with films and exhibitions, regrouped in the former "Minque" and renamed «Aquastrip».

There are also cafes and restaurants specializing in seafood products - one of them is already up and running and specializes in mussels - with the aim of creating a genuine «fish road». They target amusement park visitors and other visitors to the Bruges region along with business customers.

This project cost ECU 2 200 000, one third of which was financed by Pesca, one third by the region and the remainder by private investors.

Corrigendum on the European maritime centre network:

The Greek project selected within the framework of the European maritime centre network is in the Dodecanese and not in the Sporades as stated in Pesca Info No 8, in error.

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Interview of the month

Interview with Jim Portus, Secretary of the South Western Fish Producers Organisation Ltd, United Kingdom

Editor's note: intended as a medium for freely voiced opinions, the PESCA bulletin reflects the views held by professionals. Articles express the opinions of the authors alone.

P.I. (Pesca Info): What are the main problems, related to the EU policy in South West region?

J.P. (Jim Portus): The fishermen of South West UK feel that their industry has been betrayed by their own government and the Parliamentary power has been lost to «Brussels». They regard quotas, effort control and fleet reductions as unnecessary restrictions on their rights to earn a living from the sea. They believe that the failings of the Common Fisheries Policy, as confirmed by observers and commentators in Parliament, and in other Member States, provide overwhelming justifications for their beliefs.

CFP is not successful because after each Member State has happily abdicated responsibility to «Brussels», management by each Member State has become little more than «lip-service» to the increasingly complex raft of regulations which, although honourable in intent, are not very beneficial to fisheries conservation.

P.I.: What demands do you suggest to resolve these problems?

J.P.: I believe the remedy can only be administered by restoring competence to each Member State. There would be a set of minimum regulations in relation to Technical Conservation Measures, but each state would develop, in full cooperation between the EU and the fishermen who exploit the resources, measures designed to bring about stock replenishment. These would relate to fleet structures, seasonal closed areas, additional technical measures, etc. applicable to **all** fishermen having access.

These ideas are more fully explored in the Coastal State Management papers of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations of which SWFPO Ltd is an affiliated member.

P.I.: In the Pesca programme what could help your organization?

J.P.: Our fishing vessel owners do not have high expectations from Pesca because they are unlikely to restructure voluntarily. However, there has been interest in the region for projects related to diversification into aquaculture, transnational cooperation and gear conflict resolution, promotion of fish as a consumer product, marine tourism, shellfish stock enhancement, training and retraining, etc.

It is the overall view that Pesca will provide valuable support for the region during the period of change. Even though change is being imposed upon a reluctant catching sector, there are other innovators in the industry who can usefully access funding for suitable projects which will provide opportunities for those who wish to take them.



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Newsflash

Inter-regional Pesca meeting in November 1997

The fourth inter-regional meeting organized within the framework of Pesca will take place in Sciacca, Sicily on 13 and 14 November next and will concern the reconversion of fishing fleets in the Mediterranean.

Interprise seafood in Norway, in April 1998

The next Interprise seafood meeting will take place in April 1998 in a Norwegian port yet to be determined. This organization aims at arranging meetings between professionals from the EU and a partner state (Iceland in 1996, Morocco in 1997).

This column is available to you if you wish to announce various events or actions likely to interest the fishing world.

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