



European Commission

No 52 August 2011



FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE



 **Reform: sustainable fisheries
for a prosperous sector**

 **Seafood 2011:** a one-of-a-kind marketplace

 European Maritime Day in Gdańsk

Shows and exhibitions

Conxemar, Vigo (Spain), 4-6 October 2011

> For more information:

Website: www.conxemar.com

DanFish International, Aalborg (Denmark), 12-14 October 2011

> For more information:

Website: www.danfish.com

Aquaculture Europe 2011, Rhodes (Greece), 18-21 October 2011

> For more information:

Website: www.easonline.org

Conferences and meetings

NAFO, annual meeting, Halifax (Canada), 19-23 September 2011

> For more information:

Website: www.nafo.int

CCAMLR, Commission meeting, Hobart (Australia), 24 October – 4 November 2011

> For more information:

Website: www.ccamlr.org

Institutional agenda

Committee on Fisheries, European Parliament, Brussels (Belgium)

- 31 August 2011
- 19 September 2011
- 10-11 October 2011

> For more information:

Website: www.europarl.europa.eu

Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union

- 19-20 September 2011 (Brussels)
- 20-21 October 2011 (Luxembourg)
- 14-15 November 2011 (Brussels)

> For more information:

Website: www.consilium.europa.eu

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We welcome your comments or suggestions at the following address: European Commission – Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries – Information, communication, inter-institutional relations, evaluation and programming Unit – Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200 – B-1049 Brussels or by fax to: (+ 32) 2 299 30 40 with reference to *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*.
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- Website of Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
> http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm
- Application: the European Maritime Atlas > <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeatlas>
- Fisheries site > <http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries>
- Maritime Affairs site > <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs>

Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe is a magazine published by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission. It is distributed free on request (see subscription coupon on page 12). *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe* is published five times a year and it is also available on the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries DG website: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/magazine/index_en.htm

Editor: European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Director-General.

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Creating a virtuous circle for European fisheries

Whenever I am asked about the reasons behind this new reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, my answer is very simple: our management practices need to be completely overhauled so that it will still be possible to fish and to make a decent living from fishing in the coming years and so that this activity can once again become a driver of development. We have to do everything in our power to restore abundant fish stocks, so that our children will not reproach us for today's mistakes.

I do not wish to be alarmist but the facts are irrefutable: fish stocks have declined sharply over the last 30 years and yet in European waters we continue to exploit nearly 80% of stocks above maximum sustainable yield. We subject resources to overfishing and in the process we deprive ourselves of the additional income they could produce if fished sustainably. There are too many fishing vessels and most fleets in the European Union make little profit or operate at a loss. Catches have declined to such a point in Europe that we now have to import around two thirds of the fish we eat.

This explains why I am determined to make our policy better suited to the challenges of the 21st century. It will mean making a break with the current system, in which technical details are too often subject to European Union legislation. We have to admit that this has created too complicated a policy, too removed from the realities of those on the ground. This is doubtless one of the reasons why our policy has failed to achieve its aims of safeguarding stocks and promoting sustainable fisheries.

A modern and adapted fishing industry has to be managed in a decentralised manner. The European Union must play its role of coordination and guardian of the common interest by establishing the general principles of the policy put into practice. It is for the Member States to select measures to be applied to achieve these objectives in each region or sea basin. Of course, fish stocks pay no heed to political borders, so it is extremely important to try to develop cooperation between Member States that share resources and to ensure consistency between different sea basins.

Another essential change is already partially under way but needs to be brought into general practice, namely ecosystem-based stock management. This approach makes it possible to restore balance to stocks, protect endangered species and gradually phase out discards.

Lastly, the system of transferable catch or effort quotas has demonstrated in the Member States where it is already in place that it can ensure longer-term stability for the sector, reduce overcapacity and boost profits. It also provides support for retraining: fishermen who wish to leave the sector or cease their activity can sell their quotas.

The reform will also set other objectives such as improved consumer information and awareness, the development of competitive aquaculture and enhanced international cooperation.

The new CFP must form a coherent, effective and simple package, adapted to present and future challenges. A new policy to create a 'virtuous circle': sound and abundant stocks, sufficient and stable earnings for fisheries operators, coastal communities that return to prosperity, and well-informed consumers with access to a wide range of products supplied by sustainable fisheries.

Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner
for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries



More effective management for sustainable fisheries



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The reform proposed by the European Commission aims to resolve the number-one problem of the European fishing sector: too many vessels vie for available fish, crustaceans and molluscs.

After two years of consultation and drafting, the European Commission is proposing a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. The aim is clear: to halt overexploitation of resources, the crux of the European fisheries sector's problems. There is no disputing the facts: most stocks are overexploited, the fleet is too large, fishermen's standard of living is declining, and more and more fishery products have to be imported. To encourage a return to abundant stocks and a growing fisheries economy, the Commission intends to provide solutions today to the problems that still plague the sector in the wake of the 2002 reform.

In 2009, the Commission published its Green Paper calling for a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. The previous reform (in 2002) had laid the foundations for sustainable and more inclusive exploitation of resources, particularly by organising long-term management plans, adopting the principle of maximum sustainable yield, eliminating fleet financing, creating Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), setting up new control rules and so on.

Yet progress since 2002 is far from adequate. A key feature of the European fishing industry is still fleet overcapacity: there are too many vessels for available fish, crustaceans and molluscs. This overcapacity leads to overexploitation of stocks, which reduces the profitability of fishing activities and jeopardizes the future.

The 2009 Green Paper outlined certain ways forward, including a new system for allocating fishing opportunities that automatically results in fleet capacity adjustment to available quotas, more decentralised governance and greater involvement of the industry in resource and fisheries management.

Following publication of this Green Paper, the Commission consulted fisheries operators and representatives of the sector and of civil society to learn their views and include their different opinions in a new Common Fisheries Policy.

Strict and long-term management

The proposed reform is based on a handful of simple principles, but they will completely change the way European fisheries are managed. First, it reiterates that all stocks must be exploited in such a way as to bring and keep them above the level that can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY), an international commitment made by the European Union and all its Member States in 2002 which must be met by 2015.

To achieve and maintain this objective, fisheries must be managed more strictly, based on a long-term approach and multiannual management plans, instruments to be used for all stocks.

Strict management requires more advanced scientific knowledge of marine ecosystems and stock developments. The Commission asks the Member States to develop fish research programmes and to improve their gathering and sharing of statistical data in order to provide better input to scientific work. The Commission also wishes to strengthen its scientific consultation structure.

The reform also aims to eliminate discards by-catches over the longer term, at least for commercial species, proceeding gradually up until 2015. It proposes to count all catches against total allowable catches. The aim, though, is for fishing activity to be organised and monitored in a way that prevents such by-catches, which are discarded at sea today, through better allocation of quotas in mixed fisheries and better follow-up of their use by Member States.

Thanks to this reform, Europe's fish stocks should be restored to sound levels that are exploited sustainably. The fishing industry should return to economic health and create new and attractive jobs. More sustainable fisheries and a modern aquaculture sector must become the foundations for the development of coastal zones. And consumers will have access to sustainably managed fish of superior quality.

The key innovations of this reform proposal are detailed in the following pages.

New rules on access to resources

The European Commission proposes to totally revamp rules on access to resources, setting up a new system of transferable catch or effort quotas⁽¹⁾. This more flexible system should make it easier to adapt the fleet to available resources and to help eliminate discards at sea.

How will fishing opportunities be allocated under the scheme proposed by the Commission? Nothing changes in the first part of the process. The Commission analyses scientific advice and presents a proposal for maximum catches for each stock in the form of 'total allowable catches' (TACs). At the end of the year, the Member State Fisheries Ministers meet in Council to discuss these proposals which are then laid down in a regulation applicable from 1 January of the following year.

TACs are then split up into national quotas among the fishing States that share the stock concerned. This distribution is based on historic fishing rights, in the name of the principle of relative stability, which is confirmed in the new regulation.

At this point of the process, however, things will change. Until now, Member States distributed their national quotas by allocating them to the fleets that fish for the stock. The distribution system varied slightly from one Member State to the next, but generally speaking the quotas were allocated and remained attached to licensed vessels.

Transferable catch or effort quotas

The Commission recommends that from now on the Member States allocate fishing rights to vessel owners – either an individual or an entity – under the system of 'transferable catch or effort quotas'. This system would concern all vessels of at least 12 m and all vessels fitted with towed nets, including those less than 12 m (coastal trawling is therefore covered and would not benefit from measures for the protection of small-scale coastal fishing).

The transferable catch or effort quota for a stock can be compared to a voucher that entitles its holder to receive a certain proportion of the national quota for a given stock each year.

Taking action to halt discards

Transferable quotas will help eliminate discards. Take the example of a skipper who discovers on returning to port that he has caught more cod than he was entitled to take. Instead of discarding the surplus, he will be able to call his PO and buy or lease transferable quotas from another member in order to cover all his catches, which will be counted against the national quota.



The transferable catch or effort quota for a stock can be compared to a voucher that entitles its holder to receive a certain portion of the national quota for the stock.

Stage one: for each stock, the Member State allocates transferable quotas to the owners of vessels that operate in fisheries for this stock. Its allocation criteria must be transparent. In order to guarantee a fair degree of economic stability, the Commission proposes to grant transferable quotas for at least 15 years. This period could be shortened in two cases: if the holder commits a serious violation of fishing regulations or does not use the fishing rights for three consecutive years.

Stage two: on the basis of the national quota allocated to the Member State for the stock in question, it distributes fishing opportunities every year to holders of transferable quotas. It is also requested to set aside part of the national quota (5 % at most), saving it, for instance, for young fishermen who do not yet hold any transferable quotas or placing it in reserve for enforcement of the ban on discards. To give operators as much flexibility as possible, the system also permits the collective management of transferable quotas, by a producers' organisation (PO), for example.

As the Member States that already use transferable quotas have discovered, this system helps to streamline the fishing fleet. Owners will be able to swap, buy or lease quotas, then transfer them to a single vessel whose activities become more profitable as a result. This is the mechanism with which the Commission hopes to bring about a 'natural' adjustment of the fleet to available resources.

The draft regulation provides that transferable quotas may be swapped only at national level, although it does give Member States the possibility to open them up to nationals of another Member State.

(1) Referred to as transferable fishing concessions in the European Commission's proposal.



□ Safeguarding small-scale coastal fisheries



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On resource and fleet management, Member States will be charged with taking measures suited to the specific characteristics of their coastal fisheries.

Small-scale coastal fisheries play a key socio-economic role in certain regions. To protect this activity, the European Commission proposes to exclude it from new rules on access to resources. Operators will of course still have to meet obligations on conservation, while continuing to enjoy certain exemptions, particularly on control and monitoring of their activities, in order to respect the proportionality of this type of obligation.

Ports bustle with the activity not only of large companies, but of small fishing vessels as well. Their catches provide a livelihood for various sections of the local economy, from commerce to restaurants, tourism and certain types of processing. The sound economic health of small-scale coastal fisheries therefore helps to maintain the socio-economic – and even cultural – fabric in many coastal regions, especially in southern Europe and very remote regions.

Accordingly, the Commission proposes to Member States to apply special measures to this fleet, which would not be covered by the transferable quotas or effort scheme (1). Such measures must nevertheless have a precise aim: *'to support green, smart and inclusive growth'* by contributing to the development of sustainable fisheries having a limited impact on the marine environment. Innovation and scientific advances will be encouraged in this framework.

Small-scale coastal fishing is not the largest segment of the European fishing industry in terms of catches, but it does account for the largest number of fishermen and vessels. It is made up of 65 000 vessels, or around three quarters of all registered fishing vessels in the European fleet.

The impact of this activity on coastal resources and the environment consequently should not be underestimated. Coastal waters host a major share of marine life, especially spawning grounds and nurseries for many species, which makes them highly attractive zones for fishermen. Over-exploitation therefore needs to be prevented in these waters.

Member States in charge

Member States will be in charge of taking other measures suited to the realities of their situation and the specific nature of their coastal fisheries. They will have to devise resource conservation and fisheries management measures for their territorial waters, i.e. the 12-mile zone. The States will also have to decide on a system for allocating fishing opportunities to the vessels that make up this fleet. The Commission must nevertheless be informed about this system and about management measures in the event that fleets from other Member States may be concerned.

Fleet adjustments are therefore likely to occur here as well. The Commission proposes to offset the reduction in fishing activity by encouraging fishermen to switch to a new activity and to diversify their sources of income. In this respect, the stable and sustainable development of aquaculture is seen as a major opportunity for coastal zones.

Financial support

To help small-scale coastal fishermen adapt to the changes of the new policy and make the necessary adjustments to form part of a strategy of sustainable spatial development, specific public funding should be earmarked for small-scale coastal fishing. The form of such support will be addressed in a subsequent proposal, as part of the future Common Fisheries Policy financial instrument, soon to be placed on the drawing board.



(1) See previous article, p. 5.

■ A fisheries-based regionalised approach

The European Commission proposes a new framework for governance of the Common Fisheries Policy, because the Green Paper's findings are irrefutable: decision-making geared to short-term interests, micromanagement at the highest level in an interventionist and rules-based framework, and lack of involvement by the industry are among the five main structural failings.

To address these issues, the Commission proposes that the European Union's regulatory activity be limited to agreeing a general framework that contains objectives, common minimum standards and a calendar, whereas implementation would be organised by Member States at a level closer to the realities on the ground, with the sector closely involved. For multiannual plans, for example, the Council and Parliament would be responsible for determining their scope (which stocks or which fisheries), their general and quantifiable objectives (the fishing mortality rate to be observed, the volume of spawning-stock to be achieved and/or catch patterns), the calendar, etc.

The Member States could then put these objectives into action in the form of applicable measures adapted to the reality of their fisheries and their conditions. To go back to the example of multiannual plans, each Member State concerned could adopt its own conservation, by-catch reduction and fleet reduction measures for the fisheries concerned. The Commission would play its role as guardian of the rules by ensuring that these measures are suited to achieving the objectives agreed at European Union level.

The fact that most large stocks in EU waters are exploited by fleets from several Member States nevertheless has to be taken into account. Ideally, the implementing measures decided by these different States should be compatible with one another within a shared fishery. In this case, the Member States will have to engage in coordination but will be free to choose the form of such coordination.

There is no question of obliging all Member States to sign up automatically and straight away to this system, whether for decentralisation or coordination of individual fisheries. The Commission is aware that this will come about according to States' determination, budgetary means and facility working together. In the Baltic, for instance, there is already a strong tradition of regional cooperation that will probably make coordination of individual fisheries easier. This is not always the case elsewhere. This decentralisation and cooperation at sea basin level will therefore be phased in on a flexible basis.

In any case, the role of advisory councils is bound to evolve. In a decentralised system, their role cannot be limited to advising the Commission. They will also have to advise the Member States, which will have regulatory tasks.



The main advantage of decentralisation is to foster the active involvement of the industry in fisheries management, referred to as co-management.

Towards co-management

The implications of decentralisation go beyond the institutional sphere. Its principal advantage is to pave the way to fishermen's active participation in setting up management measures. There are already examples of this type of co-management in Europe and the Commission would like to see them become more widespread.

Producers' organisations (PO) will play a key role in this framework. Although their main function is to market their members' fishery products, the Commission would like the Member States to assign them the task of ensuring the sustainability of fishing activities. The POs could, for instance, handle the collective management of transferable catch or effort quotas. By making sure that all members have the necessary quotas to cover all species they may catch, the POs could help to reduce unwanted by-catches. They could also agree on any fisheries management measures put in place to achieve the objectives set by national or central rules, or set objectives for the control and monitoring of such measures.



□ Aquaculture: a priority



Each Member State would be obliged to draw up a multiannual strategic plan by 2014 to encourage the development of aquaculture on its territory.

The European Commission highlights once again the importance of developing a sustainable and top-notch European aquaculture industry. Its aim is to have Member States agree to abolish barriers to the development of this sector. The Commission therefore asks the States to develop their aquaculture strategy without delay and calls on the sector to organise in order to make its voice stronger.

Aquaculture is vital to meeting growing demand for fish and seafood products. It already accounts for more than one third of total production of fishery products. Aquaculture is a major source of sustainable economic growth and jobs in rural and coastal areas, which are feeling the brunt of resource depletion and fleet reduction problems.

In 2009, the Commission observed that European aquaculture had been at standstill since the turn of the century, despite the boom in the sector at global level. It identified a number of barriers to its growth and competitiveness, among which: competition for space in coastal zones, research and development costs, a lukewarm image in the public's mind, the complexity of different regulations, etc. It also called on Member States and all stakeholders to work together to bring down these barriers. The development of aquaculture is therefore clearly one of the core areas of the Union's Europe 2020 strategy: to promote sustainable and inclusive growth that creates jobs and improves the quality of life.

The measures in the Commission's reform proposal are in line with the strategy 'Building a sustainable future for European aquaculture'⁽¹⁾, adopted in 2009. It intends to ask each Member State to draw up a multiannual strategic plan by 2014 to encourage the development of aquaculture activities on its territory. Economic development and the contribution to sustainability, food security and job creation should clearly be the guiding principles of these plans. To eliminate the barriers identified in 2009, the Commission asks that the Member States' plans aim for administrative simplification, improved access to water and

space, the development of environmental, economic and sustainability indicators, study of the environmental impact of further development of aquaculture and any cross-border effects, etc.

An aquaculture advisory council

Another measure announced in this draft reform is the creation of an aquaculture advisory council. This sector is already represented in participatory governance bodies: the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) and five of the seven Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), excluding those for pelagic fisheries and high-seas fisheries which are unrelated to aquaculture. To give greater account to the opinions of the protagonists, the Commission has therefore decided to set up an advisory body specific to aquaculture.

The aquaculture advisory council will function and be financed in the same manner as the other advisory councils. It will be made up of representatives of professional associations in the aquaculture sector and of those from other organisations concerned by aquaculture, such as environmental protection and consumer groups, trade unions and women's associations. This council will be consulted on the European Union's aquaculture policy and will make suggestions and recommendations, either on its own initiative or at the Commission's request. Another task will be to draw the Commission's attention to problems that hinder the sector's development. The Commission will be required to take its opinions and suggestions into account and respond in detail within three months.

(1) COM(2009) 162 – See *Fishing & Aquaculture in Europe*, No 43, April 2009, pp. 4 to 8.

Promoting the EU's fisheries management principles beyond our waters



The European Union would undertake to follow the principle of maximum sustainable yield in exploiting its partners' resources and to take only the surplus not caught by local fishermen.

The European Union's vessels fish in every sea in the world. As part of this reform, the European Commission reiterates its commitment to promote actively around the world the principles it defends in EU waters, namely sustainable exploitation of fishery resources and respect for ecosystems. With that aim in view, the Commission proposes to act through international bodies, regional fisheries management organisations and partnership agreements with non-EU countries.

The principles of sustainability, ecosystem-based management and maximum sustainable yield applied in Europe should also be the rule at global level. The Commission therefore proposes to give the EU the means to enhance its international action.

In practical terms, governance of high-seas fisheries takes place at three levels.

- At global level, in large multilateral institutions: for example, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which spearheads globally the fight against illegal fishing.
- At the level of large maritime regions, in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO), which group fishing countries to manage the deep-sea stocks of a sea or part of an ocean: for example, the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) or the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).
- At the level of non-EU countries' exclusive economic zones, via bilateral partnership agreements concluded by the Commission between these States and the European Union.

According to the Commission, the European Union must make a commitment at these three levels to ensure that recommendations adopted by multilateral institutions, RFMO rules and fisheries legislation of non-EU States are applied diligently. It also puts into practice in this context its commitment to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The EU wishes to enhance the powers and role of these institutions and RFMOs, particularly by helping them to build scientific

knowledge of the resources and ecosystems they have to manage. This is the foundation for developing stock exploitation at maximum sustainable yield.

More demanding and sustainable partnerships

The European Union has evolved from the concept of fisheries agreements to that of fisheries partnerships. There is a considerable difference between the two: the EU no longer wished to merely buy authorisations from third States (generally in the developing world) entitling European vessels to fish in their waters. It wanted these operations to entail cooperation with the State's fisheries administration, by helping these authorities to improve their sustainable management of resources.

Today the Commission wishes to take forward the sustainable management of fisheries in its partners' exclusive economic zones. The aim is for the European Union to follow the principle of maximum sustainable yield in exploiting its partners' stocks and to take only the surplus not caught by local fishermen. This activity will therefore have to be based, on the one hand, on the best scientific estimates available, and on the other, on total transparency by the non-EU State on fishing effort in its waters, both by local fishermen and by non-local vessels. Fishing will also have to be framed by rules and effective monitoring. The Commission also recommends the addition to partnership agreements of a suspension clause tied to respect for human rights by the beneficiary State.



Seafood Exposition: a one-of-a-kind marketplace for the industry



The European Commission's stand received more than 100 requests for information. Half concerned fisheries regulations and one fourth international trade rules.

Producers, wholesalers, importers, processors and ordinary visitors thronged by the thousands to the European Seafood Exposition, in Brussels, Belgium, from 3 to 5 May. As usual, they came to discover new products, meet customers and suppliers, and sign new deals. The European Commission was present again this year to inform the industry about European policies and regulations.

'Seafood', as it is known, is the world's largest event of its kind. It gives professionals the unique opportunity to meet representatives of distribution groups, wholesalers and food services companies. It is first and foremost a marketplace for large-scale sellers and buyers. At Seafood, only samples of the goods are displayed. The actual result of the transactions concluded there occur after the event, shipped in numerous container-size volumes. Seafood Processing Europe, which takes place simultaneously, unveils the latest seafood processing and packaging technologies and services.

Sellers come from all over the world because Europe is the planet's largest market in terms of value of fisheries and aquaculture products. They come to meet wholesalers and buyers from

major distribution and food services chains, presenting and offering samples of their products, from the classics to the latest trends. Exhibitors, occasionally from countries far from Europe, are not always up to date on the rules they have to observe in order to gain entry into the European Union for their sea or inland water products.

So it is no coincidence that the European Commission set up a stand at the heart of this trade fair, making experts available to provide information and clarifications to the public.

Specialists of all kinds

The Commission's stand was manned by specialists in fisheries control, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, hygiene and public health standards, international trade, consumer protection and so on. This year, visitors made more than 100 requests for information on a wide range of subjects. Half concerned fisheries regulations and one fourth international trade rules. Other requests touched on research or hygiene and health rules.

Many visitors asked for details on the allocation and sharing of catch quotas in the European Union. Others sought information on authorisation procedures for the import of fishery and aquaculture products from certain countries into the European Union. Some producers selling fish caught in the Western Pacific were in search of information on radiation standards in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Many questions also concerned ways of obtaining public financing under the European Fisheries Fund.

The Commission's stand can also be a political platform. Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, was on hand again this year to take part in a round table on sustainable fishing. Its participants included members of the industry/WWF alliance for reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, as well as Euro-Toques, the association of European chefs. Euro-Toques recently joined this alliance, whose members include European federations of processing and distribution companies that wish to support the development of sustainable fisheries in Europe. The vast majority of consumers support this initiative, as revealed by a survey conducted by WWF in April.

■ The human dimension at the heart of maritime affairs



The 900 participants made the most of this event to share information and good practices and learn about what is being done in the maritime sphere in other parts of Europe.

European Maritime Day 2011, hosted by the Pomeranian city of Gdańsk, Poland, drew maritime professionals from across Europe. This fourth European Maritime Day, held on 19 and 20 May, spotlighted the human factor in the European maritime universe.

The European Maritime Day tradition has been in place for four years now: maritime players gather for a few days in a European city to discuss the Union's integrated maritime policy. This year's event was hosted by Gdańsk, a city whose fate has been tied to the sea since its founding in the late 10th century.

Around 900 participants gathered at the 'Polish Baltic Philharmonic' complex (*Polska Filharmonia Bałtycka*). They represented a broad range of activities: ports, fishing, freight, clusters, environmental protection, trade unions, scientific research, education, and also local, regional, national and European authorities.

Blue growth for people

The theme of this year's event was 'Putting People First'. Discussions focused on the place given to women and men in the European Union's integrated maritime policy. In her opening remarks, Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, explained that the integrated maritime policy already serves the 88 million Europeans who live in coastal regions.

'Yes, 88 million people!' pointed out the Commissioner. 'In Gdańsk as in the rest of Europe, people living in coastal regions need proper employment opportunities. Entrepreneurs need a stable investment

climate. Researchers are calling for accessible marine data. And everybody wants the seas to be safe. The Integrated Maritime Policy lays the conditions for the maritime economy to provide all this – and for economic growth to come from the sea. It is a policy at the service of the European maritime and coastal communities which aims at promoting blue growth for the benefit of European citizens.'

Many participants stressed the usefulness of this event, which they consider essential for sharing information and good practices and learning about what is being done in the maritime sphere in other parts of Europe. Many components of the European Union's integrated maritime policy were discussed, in particular regional strategies, comprehensive training for maritime careers, management of economic activities, development of short-sea shipping, the impact of economic activities on the environment, the development of marine atlases and climate change. These subjects were explored in around 20 parallel workshops held during the event.

The fifth European Maritime Day will be held next year in Gothenburg, Sweden.

For more information:
http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/maritimeday/index_en.html

In brief

Fishing opportunities: second step towards maximum sustainable yield

At the end of May, the European Commission published its policy statement on fishing opportunities. Next year will mark the second stage of the move towards maximum sustainable yield (MSY), which will become the rule for fishing from 2015. In general, the Commission notes that the state of European stocks is improving but that progress is too slow and too partial. In the Atlantic, management efforts made since 2004 have trimmed the proportion of overfished stocks from 94 % to 63 %, among those that could be evaluated. In the Mediterranean, 82 % of known resources are overexploited. Progress towards MSY is therefore essential to ensure improvement. To calculate MSY, scientists need thorough knowledge of fish stocks, which poses a problem. Scientific data are still too patchy. Certain Member States neglect their obligation to compile reliable statistics (on catches), organise surveys and quality sampling to provide input for the work of the scientific institutions tasked with monitoring the evolution of stocks. To address this failing and to coerce the Member States concerned to take this obligation seriously, the Commission has decided to reduce total allowable catches (TACs) by 25 % in cases where the lack of data prevents scientists from giving precise advice on the state of the stock. This method reflects the policy adopted at European level on the precautionary approach, i.e. to reduce risks where knowledge is not available. The Commission proposes to set TACs based on a general method applicable to all

fishery resources managed by the Common Fisheries Policy. For stocks already fished at MSY rate, catches will remain at their present level in proportion to stock levels. For stocks managed under a multiannual plan, TACs will be fixed in accordance with what is set out in the plan. For overfished stocks, an additional reduction will be made to TACs in order to bring them into line with MSY.

Fukushima: imports under close surveillance

In the wake of the accident in March 2011 at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima Daiichi (Japan), the Commission activated its emergency mechanism that tightens controls on all foodstuffs imported from high-risk areas and applies maximum permitted levels of radioactive contamination. In April 2011, maximum permitted levels were lowered in line with the action levels in Japan. These checks did not detect any overruns of ceilings authorised for fishery and aquaculture products. There is nonetheless a risk that contaminated fish may be caught outside Japanese waters and reach Europe via another supply chain. A group of experts appointed by the Commission concluded that although this risk is low it cannot be precluded. European experts therefore proposed to help the Japanese authorities to monitor and analyse products, in the framework of cooperation agreed at the EU-Japan Summit on 28 May 2011. A meeting of experts will be held in autumn 2011 to re-evaluate the risk in the light of new analyses of the contamination of sea water, sediments and marine life.

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