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PECHE 367

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 28 and 29 September 2026 Call for a legislative package enabling the modernisation of the EU fishing fleet - Information from France on behalf of Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain.

AGRIFISH COUNCIL – 28th and 29th of September 2026

AOB request from Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain

Background note

Call for a legislative package enabling the modernisation of the EU fishing fleet

The modernisation of EU fishing fleet has become one of the most pressing issues facing the EU fisheries sector. The EU fishing is more than 30 years old on average, and its ageing is expected to continue in the coming years, with renewal rates reaching historically low levels. In a context where critical upgrades and refits – such as engine replacement, transition to alternative fishing gears or the installation of basic amenities – cannot always technically be undertaken on decades-old vessels, this situation has become unsustainable for the EU:

- Strategically: ageing and energy-inefficient vessels increase the exposure of fishing companies to fuel price volatility, undermining their competitiveness and investment capacity. In turn, this may increase pressure on Member States to compensate for rising energy costs and further reinforce the EU's already high reliance on imports of fisheries products;
- Environmentally: ageing vessels hinder the fisheries sector's capacity to contribute to the EU's overarching objective of climate neutrality by 2050. They also constrain investment in cleaner propulsion technologies and, where relevant, in fishing techniques contributing to the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and the preservation and restoration of marine ecosystems;
- Socially: ageing vessels affect safety and working conditions on board, weaken the attractiveness of the sector and hinder progress towards gender equality and generational renewal.

Fleet ageing therefore jeopardises the achievement of priorities at the heart of the Commission's agenda and the implementation of key pieces of EU legislation, including the European Climate Law. However, the current EU regulatory framework under the Common Fisheries Policy still creates significant obstacles to fleet modernisation:

- Regulation (EU) n°1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy lays down rules on fishing capacity's calculation and its balance with available fishing opportunities which do not adequately accommodate the additional volumes required for the energy transition, notably for alternative propulsion and energy-storage systems;
- The 2023 Guidelines for State aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector and Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) severely restrict public support for fleet renewal and modernisation, allowing such support only in specific circumstances and subject to stringent conditions.

These regulatory constraints arise against a backdrop of limited investment capacity in the sector, due in particular to persistently high energy costs, as repeatedly underlined by the Commission; a sharp increase in the cost of constructing new vessels; and significant year-on-year volatility in fishing opportunities, which reduces the attractiveness of the sector's business model for private investors.

In view of the above, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain call for an urgent EU package of legislative measures enabling fisherwomen and fishermen to transition towards a new EU fleet model that is more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Such a package should address, in particular, the current obstacles to the renewal and

modernisation of the fleet, including by enabling appropriate public support for the construction of socially and environmentally sustainable new fishing vessels; creating effective financial incentives for the modernisation of existing vessels; and adapting the rules governing vessel tonnage and fishing capacity to facilitate the deployment of low- and zero-emission propulsion systems as well as improvements to safety, working and living conditions on board.
