Council of the European Union

Brussels, 28 November 2025
(OR. en)

15862/25

LIMITE

PECHE 413

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Interinstitutional File: 2025/0285 (NLE)

NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL REGULATION fixing the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Mediterranean and Black Seas for 2026 - Preparation for a political agreement

I) INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission submitted to the Council the above-mentioned proposal, based on Article 43(3) TFEU, on 22 September 2025[1]. The proposal aims at setting fishing opportunities for 2026 in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, in line with the multiannual plan for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean and the recommendations of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The Commission updated the proposal with a non-paper submitted on 25 November 2025[2].

2. The Working Party on Fisheries Policy examined the proposal at its meeting on 9 October 2025. The Council subsequently held the first exchange of views on the proposal on 17 November 2025. Ministers particularly highlighted the importance of taking into account the socioeconomic aspect when deciding on new measures, with one Member State requesting a moratorium on 2026 measures.

[1] ST 13077/25 + ADD 1
[2] ST 15685/25

3. The Working Party on Fisheries Policy at the Directors General level discussed the compensation mechanism in a broad manner on 18 November, whereas the Working Party at the attachés level examined the Commission non-paper on 27 November 2025. On the latter occasion, delegations entered scrutiny reservations on the non-paper. One delegation requested further technical clarifications on the non-paper, including the calculation methods, and raised the issue of its late arrival.

4. A consolidated version of the proposal was issued on 28 November 2025[3].

5. In general, the Presidency believes that the following principles should guide the discussions and the final decision:

   – a strong commitment to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) as laid down in Article 2 of the CFP Regulation[4];

   – compliance with the provisions of the multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean[5];

   – decisions based on the best available scientific advice.

6. The Presidency organised technical trilaterals on 26 November with the Commission and delegations in order to clarify the outstanding issues. These issues are presented in part II below.

II) OUTSTANDING ISSUES

7. The main outstanding issue is the significant reduction in fishing effort for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea provided for in Annex III of the Commission proposal.

8. The fishing effort reduction for trawling amounts to -65% in effort management unit (EMU) 1[6] and -64% in EMU 2[7], based on the state of the most vulnerable stock, i.e. Norway lobster in

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3 ST 15905/25 + ADD1

4 Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22).

5 Regulation (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea and amending Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 (OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 1).

6 Spanish and French waters; comprised of GSAs 1-2-5-6-7.

7 French and Italian waters; comprised of GSAs 8-9-10-11.

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geographical subareas (GSAs) 6 and 11. In its proposal, the Commission complements the effort reduction with remedial measures: catch limits for hake for gillnets and trammel nets, prohibition of the use of the otter-twin trawl gears, and minimum conservation reference size for Norway lobster. In addition, the proposal fixes a maximum allowable fishing effort for longliners fishing for hake.

9. Regarding the compensation mechanism, in addition to the various criteria, including selectivity and closure periods, allowing for vessels to be allocated additional fishing days, geographical compensation is also proposed for vessels fishing in certain GSAs. The compensation mechanism is capped by the amount of fishing days allocated under Regulation 2024/259.

10. Delegations concerned oppose those reductions and consider them to be too high, given their severe socioeconomic impact. Two delegations pointed out that the proposal does not take into account the effect of selectivity measures that had been introduced in 2025. On remedial measures, one delegation argues that those measures for hake are not justified seeing the improvement in the state of the stock. Another delegation opposes the prohibition of the use of the otter-twin trawl gear, insisting to maintain the voluntary nature of the choice of the used gear.

11. Concerning the compensation mechanism, two delegations cited the limiting nature of the overall ceiling of the mechanism. Two delegations raised concerns on the new geographical compensation based on GSAs, including the condition on having fished exclusively in a certain GSA. One delegation requested more flexibility built into the mechanism as to the transfer of fishing days between vessels that have chosen to comply with the same criteria.

12. Another element under discussion is the proposed rollover of the maximum allowable catch limits for blue and red shrimp in both management areas, as for giant red shrimp in EMU 2. One delegation requested an increase for the giant red shrimp in EMU 2. One delegation mentioned the difficulty to utilise the shrimp quota with so few fishing days allocated.

III) CONCLUSION

13. The Council is invited to address the outstanding issues outlined under point II, with a view to reaching a political agreement at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council scheduled for 11-12 December 2025.

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