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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: 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 2025¹. 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 2025².
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. More details regarding delegations' positions can be found in their written comments³.
4. A consolidated version of the proposal was issued on 28 November 2025⁴.
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 Regulation⁵;
 - compliance with the provisions of the multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean⁶;
 - 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.

³ WK 16561/25 + ADD1

⁴ ST 15905/25 + ADD1

⁵ 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).

⁶ 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).

8. The fishing effort reduction for trawling amounts to -65% in effort management unit (EMU) 1⁷ and -64% in EMU 2⁸, based on the state of the most vulnerable stock, i.e. Norway lobster in 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 given their severe socioeconomic impact and call for a rollover of 2025 fishing effort level. Two delegations pointed out that the proposal did not take into account the effect of selectivity measures that had been introduced in 2025. On remedial measures, two delegations oppose catch limits for hake, with one delegation calling for a rollover. 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. One delegation opposes the proposed 25% reduction in fishing effort for longliners in EMU 2.
11. Concerning the compensation mechanism, two delegations cited the limiting nature of the overall ceiling of the mechanism. Delegations call for maintaining the criteria and linked percentages as close as possible to 2025 measures so that the long-term effect of the mechanism can be measured, with all delegations concerned specifically mentioning the need to maintain the specific criterion on a permanent closure at a depth below 800 m. One delegation considers that vessels which have been implementing the same measure for a longer period should receive further compensation. Two delegations raised concerns on the new geographical compensation based on GSAs, including the requirement for a vessel to have fished exclusively in a certain GSA in 2025. 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.

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

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

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 well as for giant red shrimp in EMU 2. One delegation requested an increase for the blue and red shrimp in EMU 1, whereas another delegation echoed the same request for the giant red shrimp in EMU 2. One delegation mentioned the difficulty to utilise the shrimp quota with so few fishing days allocated.
13. One delegation requests to remove the provision on halving compensation if a Member State concerned does not submit its notification of additional allocation of fishing days to the Commission before 30 June 2026.

III) CONCLUSION

14. 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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