

Fisheries technical measures and multiannual plans

Technical measures and multiannual plans for fisheries management are essential tools to contribute to the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and marine ecosystems. A long-awaited proposal for a general revision of technical rules is now expected early in 2016. Equally, new multiannual plans are needed, but progress has also been slow.

Fisheries technical measures

[Technical measures](#) are detailed rules on specific aspects of a variety of fishing practices, notably concerning the fishing gear (e.g. type of device, mesh size) used and the areas (and possibly periods) concerned. They are primarily designed to reduce unwanted catches of young fish, untargeted fish or even protected species that may be caught incidentally. These [technical aspects matter](#) as they play a significant role in what is actually caught, or not caught, by fishermen. They may also aim at limiting other environmental impacts of fishing, notably on vulnerable marine habitats. From both a technical point of view and from a legal one, the current EU fisheries technical measures constitute a highly complex and disparate sets of rules, the complete review of which has been under consideration by the European Commission for some years now.

Multiannual management plans

[Multiannual plans](#) are aimed at managing given fish stocks or fisheries through different combined approaches (they may as such also include some specific technical measures). However, discussions on possible revisions or new multiannual plans had been blocked since 2009 because of divergent views between the European Parliament and the Council on their respective legislative powers (Article 43(2) and 43(3) [TFEU](#)) on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). In 2013, however, the co-legislators established within the new [CFP Basic Regulation](#) what the principles, objectives and content of multiannual plans must be, without prejudice to their respective competences. In this regard, the [Court of Justice](#) has just annulled a Regulation concerning a long term plan for cod stocks which the Council had decided to adopt on its own.

Making progress on the new Common Fisheries Policy

Considering also the discussions of an inter-institutional task force on multiannual plans and their [outcome](#) at the end of the EP's seventh term, in 2014 the Commission tabled a proposal for a multiannual plan for some stocks and fisheries in the Baltic Sea. This was the first [proposal](#) for a multiannual plan under the new CFP, but negotiations proved to be [difficult](#) after the EP [first reading](#) in April 2015. However, in view of the value of such plans in managing fisheries, several other proposals can be expected to be tabled in the coming months.

The Commission proposal for a review of fisheries technical measures, now expected early in 2016, will also need to build on the essentials of the new CFP and particularly the shift in policy to stop discards and require the landing of all fish caught – hence the importance also to reduce unwanted catches through more selective fishing practices, and stakeholders' involvement in this regard. The setting of a new framework for technical rules will also have to take account of the specific characteristics of different fisheries and the possibilities for more regionalised approaches, while keeping them in balance with the EU role and the EP's legislative powers on fisheries technical measures, and contributing to the maximum sustainable yield (the largest catch that can be taken from a fish stock over an indefinite period without harming it), one of the key conservation objectives of the reformed fisheries policy.

In anticipation of new proposals from the Commission concerning technical measures and multiannual plans, the European Parliament is now due to take a general position and give its views in this regard, based on an own-initiative report ([2015/2092\(INI\)](#)) from the EP Fisheries Committee (Rapporteur Gabriel Mato, EPP, Spain).