

## Close to a new plan to manage Baltic fisheries

The European Commission has tabled a proposal for a multiannual management plan for stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and for the fisheries exploiting them. Multiannual plans are an essential tool for sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and for increased predictability over the long run for fishermen. The European Parliament is now due to vote on a compromise found, after 10 months of interinstitutional negotiations, with a view to a first reading agreement.

### Background

The management of the main fisheries in the Baltic Sea (targeting cod, herring and sprat) needs improvement. It should be consistent with the key components of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), notably to aim at having populations of harvested fish above levels which can produce the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY – the largest catch (yield) that can be taken from a fish stock over an indefinite period, without impairing its renewability through reproduction and individuals' growth). It should also take into greater account the biological interactions between species (such as, for example, the fact that cod eats sprat and herring, as well as smaller cod). The Commission thus [proposed](#), in October 2014, a draft regulation for a multiannual and multispecies plan for the Baltic Sea.

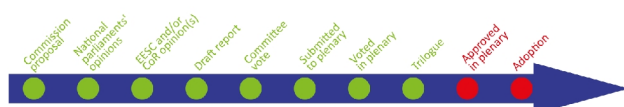
This plan proposal was seen as a [test case](#), not only because it was the first to build on the principles of the new CFP, but also because it related to issues of competence in fisheries management and governance. The [Council](#) adopted its general approach and the [European Parliament](#) voted on legislative amendments (Rapporteur Jarosław Wałęsa, EPP, Poland) in April 2015. However, the interinstitutional negotiations which followed sometimes proved difficult. Trilogue negotiations finally led to a [compromise](#) in March 2016. The EP [Committee on Fisheries](#) voted to endorse the outcome of the trilogue on 19 April 2016.

### Main issues at stake

An essential element of the plan lies in setting some key reference points to manage these stocks in the years to come. The plan fixes the acceptable levels of **fishing mortality** on the basis of which the Council would regularly set the total allowable catches for the Baltic stocks of cod, herring or sprat concerned. It also provides reference levels (biomass of fish of reproductive age) for these fish populations, which would either allow for higher fishing mortality in some conditions, or on the contrary, require fishing to be reduced and possible further remedial measures taken to ensure a rapid return of the stock to higher levels.

The Commission for its part would be **empowered** to adopt delegated acts for different fisheries technical measures, notably with the aim of improving selectivity and minimising impact on the ecosystems, but also for the benefit of stocks of flat fish caught as bycatch. These delegated powers, also covering measures for the implementation of the new CFP obligation to land all the fish caught, would be exerted on the basis of joint recommendations from Member States having a direct management interest in these Baltic fisheries, in line with the possibilities for **regional cooperation** established in the 2013 reform of the CFP. Delegation of powers may be tacitly renewed on a five-yearly basis, also subject to regular reporting.

The final adoption of this multiannual multispecies management plan for the main Baltic fisheries will also pave the way for the presentation of other proposals for such plans by the Commission in the coming months.



Additional information on this issue and on the legislative process ([2014/0285\(COD\)](#)) can be found in the EPRS 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).

