

Mediterranean fisheries management measures: Transposition into EU law

All Member States bordering the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, together with the European Union, participate in the management of fisheries in this area, in cooperation with several third countries, in the framework of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). As a contracting party to the GFCM, the EU is bound to adopt its recommendations. The European Commission therefore proposes to transpose a number of new GFCM measures that go beyond the existing regulation, into EU law.

Background

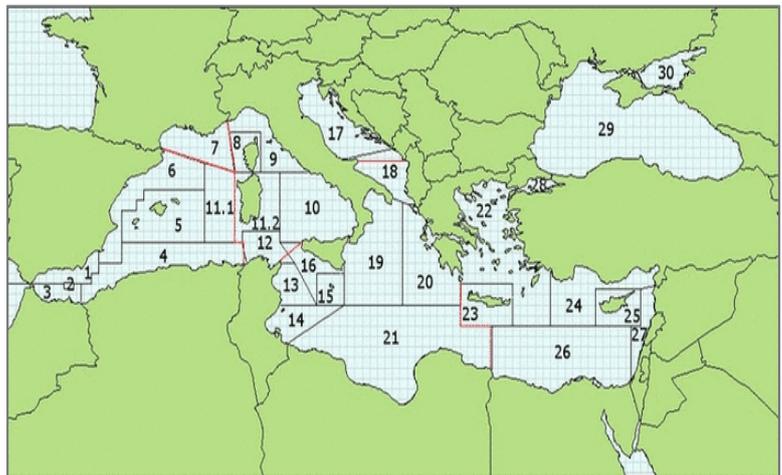
Fishing in areas beyond national jurisdiction is subject to cooperation among the countries that have fishing interests in those areas, in the framework of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). Some RFMOs have broad mandates to manage various fisheries resources in a specific geographical area, while others focus on the management of highly migratory species (in particular tunas). The two RFMOs covering the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region are the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

Being one of the oldest RFMOs, the [GFCM](#) was established in 1949 by means of an international agreement under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which entered into force in 1952. The GFCM area of application, covering the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and their connecting waters, is subdivided into 30 geographical sub-areas (see map below). The organisation has the authority to adopt compulsory decisions ('recommendations') in its area of competence.

Map – GFCM area of application and geographical sub-areas (GSA)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1: Northern Alboran Sea | 15: Malta |
| 2: Alboran Island | 16: Southern Sicily |
| 3: Southern Alboran Sea | 17: Northern Adriatic Sea |
| 4: Algeria | 18: Southern Adriatic Sea |
| 5: Balearic Islands | 19: Western Ionian Sea |
| 6: Northern Spain | 20: Eastern Ionian Sea |
| 7: Gulf of Lion | 21: Southern Ionian Sea |
| 8: Corsica | 22: Aegean Sea |
| 9: Ligurian Sea and North Tyrrhenian Sea | 23: Crete |
| 10: Southern and Central Tyrrhenian Sea | 24: Northern Levant Sea |
| 11.1: Western Sardinia | 25: Cyprus |
| 11.2: Eastern Sardinia | 26: Southern Levant Sea |
| 12: Northern Tunisia | 27: Eastern Levant Sea |
| 13: Gulf of Hammamet | 28: Marmara Sea |
| 14: Gulf of Gabes | 29: Black Sea |
| | 30: Sea of Azov |



Source: [GFCM \(FAO\)](#)

Since its adoption, the [GFCM Agreement](#) has been amended several times. The GFCM is currently made up of [24 contracting parties](#): 23 states and the European Union. The member countries include almost all coastal states, among them all ten EU Member States around the area of application (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and Romania), and one distant country (Japan). There are also three cooperating non-contracting parties (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine).

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The main objectives of the GFCM are to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilisation of living marine resources, as well as the sustainable development of aquaculture. The decisions taken by the GFCM are aimed at the recovery of fish stocks and the protection of vulnerable habitats in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. As a GFCM member, the EU is [very active](#) in initiating new decisions, and plays a critical role in fisheries governance in the region. The GFCM implements its policy and activities through a secretariat based at its headquarters in Rome, Italy.

European Commission proposal

As the EU is a contracting party to the agreement establishing the GFCM, it is bound by the measures adopted by this organisation and must enact them into EU law, in order to ensure their uniform and effective application across EU territory. Regulation [No 1343/2011](#) is the legal instrument that transposed the permanent GFCM measures (these were previously transposed on a temporary basis, through the annual regulations on fishing opportunities) into EU law. Subsequent GFCM measures are adopted by way of amendments to this regulation. After a first such amendment was introduced by Regulation [\(EU\) 2015/2102](#) concerning the 2011-2014 GFCM measures, on 22 March 2018 the European Commission put forward a [proposal](#) to transpose a number of new GFCM measures into Union law. The Commission proposal falls under exclusive EU competence.

New GFCM measures and the proposal

The new measures, which the proposal aims to transpose, were adopted by the GFCM at its annual sessions of [2015](#), [2016](#) and [2017](#) and are fully consistent with the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. A first group comprises a number of technical conservation measures, in particular:

- several fisheries-restricted areas in the Strait of Sicily (GSA 12-16 on map), where fishing with bottom trawls is prohibited, surrounded by buffer zones, where all bottom-trawl fishing activities would be tracked. These areas are established in relation to a GFCM multiannual plan for fisheries exploiting European hake and deep-water rose shrimp in the Strait of Sicily;
- fishing restrictions on the access of certain fishing gears and recreational fisheries to three specific zones in the central Adriatic Sea (the Jabuka/Pomo Pit area in GSA 17 on map), to protect habitats for demersal stocks such as European hake and Norway lobster, and vulnerable marine ecosystems;
- spatial/temporal fishing restrictions in the Alboran Sea (GSA 1-3 on map), to protect blackspot seabream juvenile and spawner aggregation areas. EU Member States are also required to maintain, by 2020, the fleet capacity or fishing effort for this species at the levels authorised for the two previous years;
- closure of the turbot fisheries in the Black Sea for at least two months during the spawning season (April-June);
- precautionary closures for the protection of red coral when a trigger catch level is reached, and additional spatial/temporal closures based on scientific advice.

A second group comprises measures for monitoring, control and surveillance, and for fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. These measures concern, among other things:

- control of red coral fisheries, as regards authorisation requirements; recording of catches; port measures such as prior notification and designated ports; control of landings; prohibition of transshipment at sea; and scientific monitoring;
- control of blackspot seabream fisheries in the Alboran Sea, in particular reporting of catches and by-catches; fishing authorisation requirements; and scientific monitoring;
- authorisation of bottom-trawl fisheries on demersal stocks in the Strait of Sicily; inspection and surveillance of fishing activities; identification of infringements; and follow-up actions in such cases;
- combatting IUU fishing in the Black Sea turbot fisheries, as well as establishing national plans for the control of these fisheries.

Parliament's Committee on Fisheries (PECH) is responsible for considering this proposal, with Linnéa Engström (Greens/EFA, Sweden) as rapporteur (procedure [2018/0069\(COD\)](#)).

