

Support for Baltic cod and herring fisheries

During the November I part-session, Parliament is due to vote on approving a provisional agreement with the Council enabling financial support for permanent cessation of fishing activities under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for certain Baltic Sea fisheries. The agreed text extends the scope of the Commission proposal to include not only those fishermen affected by the eastern Baltic cod closure, but also cod and herring fishermen in the western Baltic who are faced with a major reduction in fishing opportunities.

Background

At the time of proposing the 2020 fishing opportunities, a scientific [assessment](#) from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) showed that the eastern Baltic cod stock was in a worse state than previously estimated, largely due to the bad environmental situation, and included a 'zero-catch' advice. In July 2019, in line with the [basic regulation](#) of the common fisheries policy and the multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea (the [Baltic MAP](#)), the European Commission established an [immediate closure](#) of the fishery targeting the eastern Baltic cod stock. The closure remained in place through the Council Regulations setting the fishing opportunities for [2020](#) and for [2021](#), leaving only a small amount for by-catches in order not to choke fisheries that do not target the stock.

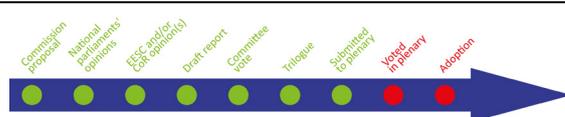
European Commission proposal

The closure has affected more than 300 vessels, mainly trawlers and netters in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, and to a lesser extent, Denmark and Germany, which already suffered from the poor status of the stock. In addition, due to major reductions in the fishing opportunities for other Baltic stocks, the vessels concerned cannot compensate for this closure with fishing activities on other species. As a recovery of the stock is not expected before 2024, the Commission put forward a [proposal](#) on 31 October 2019 which would introduce the possibility to support permanent cessation for the vessels concerned by amending the current European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) [Regulation](#). Furthermore, it aims to amend the Baltic MAP by introducing capacity limits for the fleet segments concerned and by including additional measures to increase control and data collection.

European Parliament position

On 23 April 2020, the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries (PECH) adopted its [report](#) on the proposal and gave the green light to start trilogue negotiations. A [provisional agreement](#) between Parliament and Council was reached on 22 September after two rounds of negotiations. The agreed text, approved by the PECH committee on 12 October, expands the scope of the permanent cessation to western Baltic cod and western Baltic herring fisheries following the severe reduction in fishing opportunities for those stocks. The principle that the capacity levels of the fleets concerned should be reduced by the capacity of the vessels withdrawn with public aid is maintained but without the detailed definition of the relevant fleet segments proposed by the Commission. Other changes to the proposal include the removal of the 20 % observer coverage threshold and the obligation to have a vessel-monitoring system on board. The agreed text is now subject to formal adoption by Parliament, with a vote during the November I plenary session, after which it will be referred to the Council for final adoption.

First-reading report: [2019/0246\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: PECH; Rapporteur: Niclas Herbst (EPP, Germany). For further information see our 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).



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PE 659.319 – November 2020



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