

**Question for written answer E-003344/2021
to the Council**

Rule 138

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Subject: Vessels of less than 9 metres in length exempt from geolocation – Council's general approach on the reform of the Fisheries Control Regulation

During its meeting on 28 June, the Council adopted a general approach on the reform of the Fisheries Control Regulation¹.

In its position, the Council introduced paragraph 3a to Article 9 of the Commission's proposal. This paragraph would empower Member States to exempt Union fishing vessels of an overall length of less than 9 metres from the requirement to be equipped with a tracking device if they comply with certain conditions.

In principle, this exemption is justified, given that requiring vessels in the small-scale coastal fleet to have their location tracked at all times seems excessive. While the Fisheries Control Regulation reform was passing through the European Parliament, the Spanish People's Party tabled amendments² in a similar vein³. However, we should keep in mind that the usual definition of 'small-scale coastal fishing' in the EU refers to fishing vessels of an overall length of less than 12 metres⁴, not 9 metres.

What criteria has the Council used to propose that only vessels of an overall length of less than 9 metres may be exempt from geolocation, as opposed to those of less than 12 metres, which is the usual definition of the small-scale coastal fleet in the EU?

¹ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, and amending Council Regulations (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 1967/2006 and (EC) No 1005/2008 and Regulation (EU) No 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards fisheries control (COM(2018)0368 – C8-0238/2018 – 2018/0193(COD)).

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0016-AM-320-324_EN.pdf

³ 'By way of derogation from paragraphs 1, 2 and 3, Member States shall be empowered to exempt small-scale vessels operating exclusively in the internal waters of the flag Member State from the requirement to have a tracking device on board.'

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.