



2015/2154(DEC)

14.1.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014, Section III – Commission (2015/2154(DEC))

Rapporteur: João Ferreira

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Takes note of the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the Court of Auditors on the annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2014; takes note also of the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors concerning the financial year 2014; takes note of DG MARE's 2014 annual activity report; takes into account the Court of Auditors Special report No 11/2015 on fisheries partnerships agreements;
2. Takes note of the opinions of the Court of Auditors on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts; notes the adverse opinion of the Court of Auditors on payment appropriations, in respect of which the overall error rate was 4,4 % but with no specific error rate concerning fisheries; calls for fisheries to be dealt with separately and not merged with agriculture, in order to guarantee greater transparency in the area of fisheries;
3. Notes DG MARE's reservation with regard to the management and control system for EFF programmes in some Member States;
4. Is reassured that the internal control system implemented by DG MARE provide sufficient assurance to adequately manage the risk relating to the legality and regularity of the transactions;

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

5. Notes that the adoption after 1 January 2014 of programmes under shared management for the EMFF and other ESI Funds led to a technical revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in order to transfer unused appropriations from 2014 to subsequent years;
6. Expresses its deep regret that the vast majority of Member States transmitted their operational programme related to the EMFF very late, which has caused huge delays in the mobilisation of funds; recalls that Member States are responsible for implementing credits in share management;
7. Takes the view that the Member States should improve the instruments and channels they use to transmit information to the Commission; recommends that the Commission exert greater pressure on Member States to submit reliable data;
8. Urges the Commission to provide all possible support for the Member States with a view to ensuring proper and full use of EMFF resources, with high implementation rates, in line with their respective priorities and needs, in particular as regards the sustainable development of the fisheries sector;

Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

9. Welcomes the entrustment of the Agency on the EMFF from 1 January 2014 onwards;

takes note of the Memorandum of understanding signed between DG MARE and the Agency on 23 September 2014; stresses the need to promote a high quality support by the Agency to all its beneficiaries on the 19 EMFF actions;

European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 11/2015 (2014 Discharge): Are the Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) well managed by the Commission?

10. Takes note of the elements contained in the Special Report No 11/2015 on FPAs;
11. Calls on the Commission to take into account the Court's recommendations;
12. Laments the financial cost generated by the under-utilisation of the tonnage quotas adopted in recent protocols; proposes that payments for access rights be linked more closely with actual catches; calls on the Commission, to ensure that sectoral support disbursements are consistent with other budget support payments and calls for an improvement of the results achieved by the partner countries in the implementation of the matrix of commonly agreed actions;
13. Stresses, as the Court as pointed out, that complementarity and consistency among the FPAs negotiated within the same region can be improved, in order to maximise their potential at regional level;
14. Underlines that the information provided by independent *ex post* evaluations was not always sufficiently complete, consistent or comparable, which reduced its usefulness in the decision-making process and negotiations; notes, furthermore, that these evaluations do not sufficiently assess the extent to which the FPAs meet all of their objectives, such as making no reference to employment in EU regions depending on fishing, or giving no information on the supply of fish on the EU market;
15. Expresses concern on the lack of reliable, verifiable and accessible information on fish stocks and on the fishing effort of domestic fishing fleets, or of other foreign fleets that have also been granted access, as one of the main objectives of the FPAs is only to fish surplus stocks and this was proven as very difficult to implement in practice;
16. Expresses concern that fisheries' activities could be interrupted between two protocols; calls on the Commission to guarantee the legal and economic security of operators by assuring the continuity of fishing operations between two protocols;
17. Urges the Commission to monitor more closely the implementation of sectoral support in order to ensure its effectiveness;
18. Emphasises the need for effective monitoring of EU-funded activities that provide sectoral support in the context of international agreements by using matrices that are as detailed as possible; emphasises, furthermore, that a call needs to be made for the proportion of sectoral support to be increased; firmly believes that the trade-related parts of agreements ought ultimately to be made conditional upon effective, sufficiently monitored, substantial sectoral support;
19. Notes with concern that the protocols currently in force still do not provide for the possibility of partial payments when the results are only partially achieved; acknowledges

that, when there have been no or limited results achieved, the payment of the sectoral support for the following year is to be suspended until the targets have been met; nevertheless, calls on the Commission to include, where possible, in the new protocols the possibility of partial payments of the sectoral support;

Discharge

20. Proposes, on the basis of the data available, to grant discharge to the Commission in respect of its expenditure in the areas of maritime affairs and fisheries for the financial year 2014.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	14.1.2016
Result of final vote	+ : 17 - : 0 0 : 0
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Alain Cadec, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Isabelle Thomas, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jarosław Wałęsa
Substitutes present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, José Blanco López, Nicola Caputo, Ole Christensen, Francisco José Millán Mon