



Towards a new EU Fisheries Control System: How to deliver fully documented fisheries

Event Summary Report

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The European Commission's proposal for the **Revision of the Fisheries Control System** puts forward measures to make the system more effective and efficient, to harmonise fisheries controls across EU Member States. Following the exchange of views on the Rapporteur's report, Ms Isabelle Thomas (S&D), in the Fisheries Committee (PECH), a debate took place on the future EU fisheries control system. The event "How to deliver fully documented fisheries" focused on the tracking and reporting of small scale vessels, the traceability of the fishery products and improved data sharing and transparency. By hearing directly from small-scale fishers and industry representatives this debate aimed to give the voice to the sectors that will have to comply with future control rules, as well as experts from the National authorities and the European Fisheries Control Agency. The panel included:

- **Isabelle Thomas MEP**
- **Georg Werner**, Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)
- **Nicolás Fernández Muñoz**, Presidente en GALP Litoral Cádiz Estrecho, Andalucía
- **Daniel Voces de Onáindi**, Managing Director, Europêche
- **Mario Santos**, Head of Unit EU Waters and North Atlantic, EFCA
- **Bérengère Lorans**, Deputy Head of the Fisheries Control Unit, French Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Department
- **Francesca Arena**, Head of the Control Unit of **DG MARE**
- **Ricardo Serrão Santos MEP**

In her opening speech, **MEP Isabelle Thomas** stressed the importance of the Revision of the Fisheries Controls System, as there cannot be any efficient politics without regulations. She identified 3 main objectives to ensure the respect of the Common Fisheries Policy: harmonization of fisheries controls throughout the EU, simplification and making regulations more understandable and finally organising the collection and analysis of data in a reliable way. "The future changes must not be borne by the fishers", she said. The Parliament proposed the creation of an online tool of simple access, allowing fishers to keep themselves informed in real time of their rights and obligations. There are 82,000 vessels in European waters, 70,000 of which are less than 12 metres long. If we fail to aggregate and process the data of these vessels we deprive ourselves of essential data preventing the adoption of appropriate management decisions. The digital reporting of catches should be applied to all European



vessels, and the Parliament believes the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) is the best choice to centralize the data.

Speaking on behalf of EJP, **Georg Werner** expressed the need to create a fruitful platform of discussion between all stakeholders to achieve a strong new EU Fisheries Control System. He stressed the importance of the small-scale vessel sector as it represents 85 % of all fishing vessels and 23 % of total catches in the EU. “Voluntary tracking systems like the Green Box system in Andalusia do exist, and have been really effective”, he said. [A short film](#) was presented on the Green Box system to monitor small-scale vessels in Andalusia. It demonstrated how the voluntary monitoring of small-scale vessels and catch reporting is currently possible and helpful not only for control authorities, but also for fishers themselves and ultimately for consumers, and it should therefore be extended to all EU waters.

During his speech, **Nicolás Fernández Muñoz** talked about the Fisheries Control System established in Andalusia: The « Green Box » system. This system ensures control, tracking and safety of fisheries and fishermen. Without extra cost, the implementation of this system provides excellent fisheries management. It promotes the creation of the « Fishing Producers Organization 72 » (OPP72) and 62,000Ha Marine Protected Area of fishing interest. Green boxes were installed in 93% of small vessels in Andalusia and provided invaluable data for management control and safety at sea. Unfortunately, there is a lack of effective implementation and management due to conflicts linked to recreational activities. **Fernández Muñoz** concluded by highlighting that there was no use in voting on fish subsidies support under EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) if there is no correct monitoring. All vessels, commercial and recreational, should be monitored. Further knowledge can be found in his [PowerPoint presentation](#)

In his intervention, **Daniel Voces De Onaindi** from Europêche explained that the EU relied on imports for over 60% of its consumption. Sadly, controls are not applied in a homogeneous and a harmonized manner to both EU and non-EU imported products. ““IMO number” included in the catch certificate for imports of fisheries products under the IUU Regulation would ensure the traceability of fisheries throughout the entire value chain”, he said. The current marketing standards, apply to 75% of EU landings, but only about less than 10% of imports. These standards should ensure brand correspondence to the scientific term and focus not only on the product quality. Consumers should be correctly informed. “Sustainable fisheries should be more included in agreements”, he said. Sustainable fisheries are incompatible with importing products from unsustainable countries. **Daniel Voces De Onaindi**, hoped the decision makers will remedy these issues. More details can be found in his [PowerPoint presentation](#)

Mario Santos from **EFCA** started his intervention by stating that different management measures call for different control and monitoring options. EFCAs Joint Deployment Plans (JDP) have greatly contributed to facilitate the exchange of primary fisheries and control data and provide a solid basis for regional risk management approach. The introduction of REM systems and the improved framework for data management could ensure a continuous and more effective control and monitoring. The key values of these JDPs encompass: training exchange of information, promoting transparency, and the exchange of information among inspectors. He also mentioned the EFCA Operational Patrol Vessel (OPV) as a crucial tool to promote effectiveness, level playing field and the exchange of best practices between different control authorities. “There is a lack of consistent global picture of EU fishing activities World-Wide”, he said. A strategy of management at the EU level and a central repository of EU Member state primary fishing data would be a possible way forward. EFCA also provides training to member states officials from EU and non EU countries and supports



international cooperation in direct assistance of the Commission. More information can be found in his [PowerPoint presentation](#).

During her intervention, **Béregère Lorans** from the French Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Department stated that the French administration saw the revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation as a positive aspect that will provide simplification and clarifications. She highlighted 3 main elements. Firstly, the importance of a harmonized control system with a special focus on the digitalization of catches declarations for all vessels. Secondly, **Lorans** stressed the importance of implementing a comprehensive, simplified traceability system including imports from third countries. Lastly, the centralisation of serious breaches and penalties within the control regulation currently dispersed in several regulations, causing problems regarding the uniform implementation of regulations.

In her keynote speech, **Francesca Arena** of **DG MARE** explained that all the issues regarding fisheries were all interlinked. The Commission agreed with the 3 main objectives mentioned by **Isabelle Thomas** and stressed the importance of implementing harmonization. **Arena** welcomed the success of the “Green Boxes” and mentioned the need for better and more reliable tools to ensure traceability. “The technology is at our disposal to make changes”, she said. Providing a toolbox and video monitoring on board will ensure better fisheries management. Without it, fisheries will be managed unsustainably and inequality between fishermen will prevail. She concluded by stressing the need to take these tools into account and deal with recreational vessels.

In his closing remarks, **MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos** pointed out that recreational fisheries was a recurrent and out control issue. He called for better and more reliable fisheries control. The legislation has to be improved and sharpened, he said. Financial resources are available but a better budget should be included to ensure progress.

This event was co-organised with:



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