

Fisheries: Council agreement on measures to address economic crisis in the sector

Council yesterday adopted, by qualified majority, the emergency package of restructuring measures to tackle the fuel crisis in the fisheries sector proposed by the Commission on 8 July (see [IP/08/1120](#)). The package will promote the restructuring of those segments of the European fishing fleet which have been hardest hit by the current fuel crisis, while cushioning its short-term social and economic impacts for those who commit to taking long-term action. The core of the measures, adopted yesterday in the form of a Council Regulation, consist of temporary derogations to the European Fisheries Fund, allowing funds to be targeted quickly where they are needed most to address the underlying causes of the crisis, and to provide short-term support to the hardest-hit segments of the fleet that commit to restructure. Joe Borg, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries welcomed the constructive approach taken by Ministers to ensure rapid action.

"I am delighted that Council was able to reach political agreement on this urgent response to the fuel crisis and to bring about the necessary restructuring of the fisheries sector. Taken together, this package of measures represents a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to the challenges which the sector is currently facing. It combines emergency measures with a whole new range of options for the long-term restructuring of the EU fleet. The Commission now stands ready to help the Member States to implement the measures as rapidly as possible, and to take full advantage of the opportunity they represent", commented Joe Borg.

The package constitutes a multi-dimensional approach to the current crisis, incorporating:

- emergency measures, consisting principally of temporary cessation aid, to help fishermen cope with short-term pressures while the sector prepares a longer-term strategy;
- a whole new range of restructuring measures for fleet segments which sign up to Fleet Adaptation Schemes, to be adopted at national level;
- horizontal measures which fall outside the Fleet Adaptation Schemes, including increased EFF aid-intensity for fuel-saving equipment, expertise in relation to energy audits and restructuring plans, expanding the rank of beneficiaries eligible for early retirement under the EFF, and promoting research on fuel-saving technologies;
- market measures under both the EFF and the Common Organisation of the Market, including a new price-monitoring observatory, and additional financial support for stakeholder-led initiatives, and
- measures designed to facilitate the use of the EFF, so as to ensure fast and targeted action by Member States.

The Commission is delighted by the rapidity with which it has been possible to push through these vital emergency measures, thanks to excellent collaboration with both the Council and the European Parliament.

In its Communication, also published on 8 July, the Commission expressed its readiness to propose making additional funds available for this restructuring process. It also proposed examining possible changes to the de minimis rules for the fisheries sector and social aid in the form of decreased social security contributions, and analysis of these options continues.