



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 9.04.2015
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Assemblée nationale for its Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down a prohibition on driftnet fisheries, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 812/2004, (EC) No 2187/2005 and (EC) No 1967/2006 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 894/97, {COM(2014) 265 final}.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Assemblée nationale on the revised definition of driftnets, as introduced by the Commission's proposal.

The Commission acknowledges that overall the Assemblée nationale is not in favour of a total driftnets ban. In particular, the Commission takes note of the Assemblée nationale's concerns regarding the justification for the proposal vis-à-vis its possible impacts and on the need to respect the regionalisation principle introduced by the recent reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The Commission would like to emphasise that during the preparation phase of this proposal, particular attention was paid to the quality and scope of the Impact Assessment. A wide public consultation took place, complemented by a number of studies and analyses. The potential socio-economic effects had also been analysed, based on the data then available.

The responses to the public consultation organised by the Commission in preparation of the proposal from stakeholders and Member States did not provide a complete and detailed overview of the use of driftnets.

Therefore, further information has been sought by the Commission from public authorities and private bodies in an additional effort to offer a more comprehensive view of the likely consequences of a total ban.

In the specific case of France, however, the national government confirmed that no additional information is available on driftnet fisheries compared to what had already been communicated in the impact assessment phase.

*Mr Claude BARTOLONE
President of the Assemblée nationale
126 rue de l'Université
F - 75007Paris*

Discussions of the proposal by the co-legislators, the Parliament and the Council allows for further consideration of the concerns regarding potential specific impacts of the proposal.

In facilitating the negotiations between the institutions, the Commission will continue to provide necessary elements in this regard, including all additional information it will receive. The Commission shares the concern of the Assemblée nationale on the need to apply the regionalisation principle in future initiatives under the CFP, when relevant. The Commission would like in fact to point out that in some cases the very local and specific nature of some small scale fisheries may prevent this approach from being applied in the correct manner. This is the case of small scale coastal driftnets activities, where the high degree of local specificities and the lack of a regional (i.e. transnational) dimension do not fit the regionalised approach as conceived in the CFP reform (Regulation EU No 1380/2013).

In addition, whilst regionalisation is one of the main principles in the CFP, the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management should also be considered in this context.

The Commission notes also the Assemblée nationale's view that artisanal fisheries should be supported. In this regard, the Commission would like to recall that the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) could be used to support the transition towards any future regime regulating small-scale driftnets that the co-legislators may decide.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Assemblée nationale and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Karmenu Vella
Member of the Commission*