



## EU SECTORAL SOCIAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE FOR SEA FISHERIES

EP(15)101

1<sup>st</sup> December 2015

*Press Release*

### **EU/FISHERIES: European Social Partners committed to overcome social deficiencies in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**

***At the Plenary meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015 the employers' representatives of Europêche<sup>1</sup> and Cogeca<sup>2</sup> and the workers' organisation ETF<sup>3</sup> met with the key players with the aim of improving social and working conditions for fishermen across Europe. Discussions took place to adequately address the problems faced by the EU fishing industry, owing to the lack of recognition of fishermen qualifications, poor safety and vocational training, high rate of accidents at sea, workplace health, IUU and migrant workers.***

During the discussions held on international ocean governance, EU Social Partners (SP) stated that the CFP aims to ensure that fishing is an environmentally sustainable activity, and it has been quite efficient in doing so. Together with the industry's efforts and sacrifices, huge progress has been made to make stocks healthy and abundant. However, the CFP forsakes the fishermen who work hard to bring healthy seafood to our homes, putting their safety at sea and social welfare at stake.

The European Commission (EC) action against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing illustrates the Union's social shortcomings perfectly. The EC makes use of the yellow card against 3<sup>rd</sup> countries identified as uncooperative in the fight against IUU fishing which threatens the viability of fish stocks. However, in view of the reports showing that some 3<sup>rd</sup> countries' fishermen are working under unacceptable conditions, which tools are at EU's disposal to reverse this dramatic situation? Have the fish more rights than fishermen?

**Cor Blonk**, Chair of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries (SSDC-F) declared that: *"We have witnessed shocking allegations over disrespect of human rights in Thailand's prawn industry as well as in EU waters, which we strongly condemn. The EU regulation against IUU fishing makes no reference to unacceptable living and working conditions of fishers as a factor contributing to IUU fishing. The ILO Work in Fishing Convention C188 is a milestone convention applicable to all*

<sup>1</sup> **Europêche** represents the catching sector in Europe. In the context of the Social Dialogue, the Association comprises 14 national organisations of fishing enterprises from Iceland and the following 9 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, PL and UK.

<sup>2</sup> **Cogeca** is the united voice of agricultural cooperatives in the EU. It also represents the interests of fisheries cooperatives in Europe through its FISH Working Party which it shares with Copa. Currently, the fisheries representatives come from the following 5 countries: DE, IE, IT, MT, SI.

<sup>3</sup> The **European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF)** represents more than 3.5 million transport workers from more than 230 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.

types of fishing vessels and seeks to provide minimum standards that protect fishers in all aspects of their work<sup>4</sup>. Its must-needed ratification by Member States and 3<sup>rd</sup> countries would certainly contribute to deterring some of the unacceptable reported violations". During the meeting, the EU SP also requested the EC to include their revised social clause in future Sustainable Fishing Partners Agreements (SFPAs) with third countries. The clause refers to standards of social protection and aims at ensuring decent working conditions for non-EU fishermen working on-board vessels operating through the SFPAs.

EU SP discussed with EC's anti-trafficking unit the intolerable situation of undocumented migrants working illegally onboard Irish fishing vessels. Recently, Ireland has agreed on a new scheme for migrant workers in the fishing industry, which includes a compulsory binding contract of employment, minimum wage, repatriation and health insurance.

**Fleming Smidt**, vice-Chair of the SSDCSF declared: *"We call on the Irish Government to eradicate human trafficking in the Irish fishing industry. There is no place for forced labour in our seas and oceans. The EU SP produced a couple of years ago a binding agreement which implements the Convention 188 into EU legislation which already covers the rights included in the new Irish scheme. We urge the EU to give our agreement the highest priority, which if had adopted in due time by the EU as requested by the SP, it would have contributed to prevent these abuses."*

In addition, the EU SP together with MEP Sofia Ribeiro (EPP, PT)<sup>5</sup> have been closely working to improve health, safety and working conditions on board EU fishing vessels. Together they aim to close the existing gap, for far too long, in the fishing industry concerning the recognition of certificates which is impeding the free movement of workers. In addition, they attempt to make safety standards for crews of fishing vessels mandatory internationally, including basic safety training for all personnel regardless of the size of the fishing vessel.

**Mrs Ribeiro** stated that: *"Both objectives are within easy reach through the swift ratification and implementation of the STCW-F by all Member States in Europe. We are talking about basic safety and working conditions, so we should all be ashamed that we are still having to discuss it"*. Mrs Ribeiro has recently presented a proposal that will allow for a mandatory European law on this issue.

EU social partners urge the EU and Member states to quickly implement the standards and principles contained in mentioned legal texts, which will lead to better working and living conditions, job attractiveness, development of professional training, free movement of workers and will improve fisheries governance and contribute to global food security.

**ENDS**

**For further information, please contact:**

*Daniel VOCES, Europêche Policy Advisor (+32.2.230.48.48 or [daniel.voces@europeche.org](mailto:daniel.voces@europeche.org))  
Livia SPERA, ETF Political Secretary (+32.470.93.05.89 or [l.spera@etf-europe.org](mailto:l.spera@etf-europe.org))*

---

<sup>4</sup> The following areas are covered: minimum age for work; medical examination and certification; manning and hours of rest; crew lists; fishers' work agreements; repatriation; recruitment and use of private employment agencies; payment; accommodation and food; medical care at sea; occupational safety and health; social security; and protection in the case of work-related sickness, injury or death.

<sup>5</sup> MEP Sofia Ribeiro (EMPL Committee) was the rapporteur in the European Parliament for the Council Decision authorising Member States to sign and/or ratify IMO STCW-F 95 Convention. It has come into force on 29 September 2012.