

Europêche welcomes second EU aid package to overcome energy crisis

- **One billion Euros will be unlocked from the previous fisheries fund (EMFF) to support fishing companies**
- **The sector looks forward to a speedy implementation in all Member States**

Brussels, 6 July 2022

Today, the European Parliament, in a coordinated effort with the Council of the EU, swiftly adopted a modification of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF 2014-2022) to alleviate the consequences of the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine on fishing activities. Europêche welcomes the swift adoption of this legislative proposal, steered by the rapporteur Nuno Melo (EPP, PT), which will allow the use of additional crisis measures to support fishermen. Particularly, EU funding will be made available to compensate for additional costs, income forgone and the storage of seafood, as well as for the temporary cessation of fishing activities. As for the latter measure, thanks to the European Parliament, aid will be extended for companies that temporarily cannot continue fishing due to economic constraints. The sector now calls on all EU Member States to activate these measures as a matter of urgency.

Three months ago, the European Commission presented its proposal, putting forward the necessary legislative modifications to allow Member States more flexibility to reallocate funds under the (EMFF) to specific measures mitigating the socio-economic impact of the crisis. Both the Council and the Parliament also modified EMFF-provisions to allow aid for those fleets forced to stay in the port due to the financial constraints. For many ship-owners, going out at sea, means losing money.

According to Europêche, the situation is critical in many fishing ports in Europe. Sky-rocketing energy prices are preventing numerous fishing companies from breaking even. The situation is expected not to improve over the next few months, if anything, quite the opposite. EU estimates show that if fuel prices will continue at this level, the EU-27 fishing fleet would have losses of € 300 million in the operating profit, risking the sustainability of the fleet.

Daniel Voces, managing director of Europêche, declared: *“The financial package will certainly help bringing relief and stability to fishermen and the markets. The goal is no doubt to adopt all necessary measures to secure fish operations and the supply of seafood to the market. The EU fleet, as food producers, has taken the responsibility to continue fishing during the different crisis and pandemic periods”.*

EU governments are reacting differently to the situation and adopting measures at a different pace and extent. Fishermen in many EU countries are not receiving funding in time, or in sufficient quantity, to compensate for the huge price increases. It is now fundamental that the Commission pushes national authorities to quickly put in place these measures as a matter of urgency and to use state aid tools to mitigate the consequences of the crisis.

Furthermore, the European Commission should carry out an analysis of the cumulative effect of the war not only on rising energy prices but also on new legislation such as ‘Fit for 55’, which risk having dire consequences on EU businesses to pay their energy bills and to continue providing seafood.

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