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Demersal fishermen in Baltic dealt huge blow by EU

- For immediate release -

Demersal fishing in the Baltic Sea has been dealt a huge blow by the Council of Ministers on Monday night when they reached agreement on fishing opportunities for 2017 in the Baltic. The ministers ended up agreeing on a quota reduction of no less than 56% for cod in the Western Baltic Sea, while the quota for cod in the Eastern Baltic Sea was reduced by 25%.

The end result is far from the proposal prepared by the fishing industry and supported by Europêche. This proposal suggested a reduction in the cod quota in the western Baltic of 20 percent and documented how such a reduction would deliver both growth in population and provide the economic basis that would enable fishermen to survive.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat said: *"It is simply terrible for the fishermen who have their fishing activities in the Baltic Sea - they have been dealt a huge blow by the Council of Ministers decision. This will in particular affect coastal fishing because the quota in 2017 is eroding their revenues and thus fishermen's incomes dramatically"*.

The fishing body regrets that the majority of ministers did not go to battle for the industry but chose to react on the misinformation from NGOs that the cod was at risk of collapse. The proposal from the industry would have given an increased stock of cod in the western Baltic Sea, but it would take a little longer before stock target would be reached. Unfortunately, also Commissioner Vella chose the radical interpretation of the biological advice and chose principles above the survival of the industry.

Garat continued: *"The decision was taken without regard for the fishermen who must be given the economical opportunity to make ends meet. We already have a growing cod stock, but there will not be local fishermen to catch them after 2017. This is of course not acceptable seen from the fishing side."*

In addition to the extreme and unnecessary quota reduction in the Western Baltic, the Council of Ministers in its adoption also decided that the fishermen again must have a closing period - now extended by two weeks to last from February 1 to March 31. However, there will be an exception for vessels up to 15m who are allowed to fish out to a water depth of 20m all year round.



Garat concluded: *"It is a positive step but it is far from compensating for the quota reduction and it makes no sense with a closing period that is not biologically justified. This applies especially to Area 24 where the closing period in no way is consistent with the cod spawning period. On the contrary, we have a clear statement from scientists, as a reaction to the closure introduced last year, where they point out that there is absolutely no biological argument for closing the area. It is shameful the way science is used as an argument when reductions are decided, but ignored when they do not fit the political wishes."*

The Council of Ministers also decided on the quotas for the eastern Baltic, where the cod quota is reduced by 25%. Here the industry had proposed an unchanged quota from 2016 to 2017.

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Europêche represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 15 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 10 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, LV, PL, UK.

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