

Europêche welcomes European Economic and Social Committee call for a guaranteed 6.1 billion budget 2028–2034 for fisheries

- Press Release -

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Europêche, the representative body of the European fishing sector, strongly welcomes the adoption by a large majority of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Opinion calling on EU institutions to secure a minimum and mandatory allocation of €6.1 billion for the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) for the 2028–2034 period.

The opinion, for which Javier Garat, President of Europêche, acted as rapporteur, stresses that this amount—equivalent to the current 2021–2027 budget—is essential to safeguard fisheries as one of the few exclusive competences of the European Union and to prevent the sector from having to compete financially with other priorities within the future National and Regional Partnership Fund.

'The EESC is sending a clear message to EU institutions: fisheries need a stable, dedicated and predictable financial framework that provides legal certainty for fishers and enables the effective delivery of the CFP's legally binding objectives,' said Javier Garat.

The opinion, supported by Daniel Voces, Managing Director of Europêche, acting as advisor, calls for fisheries to be addressed in a dedicated chapter, separate from agriculture, as currently proposed. It further underlines that public support is indispensable to enable fishers to invest in innovative technologies, enhance safety on board, attract younger generations to the sector, advance the decarbonisation of fishing activities, and safeguard the competitiveness of the EU fleet vis-à-vis third countries.

The opinion is concerned about the apparent prioritisation of achieving the objectives of the non-binding European Ocean Pact, instead of prioritising contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP, which is the objective defined under the TFEU. In this context, the EESC calls on Member States to ensure sufficient investments in key areas such as data collection, control, fisheries management and fleet-related measures.

Furthermore, the opinion advocates for a more flexible definition of small-scale coastal fisheries, aligned with FAO and regional fisheries management organisation criteria. It also warns about the ageing of the EU fishing fleet, with an average age of 31.5 years, and the ongoing loss of workforce. To address this, the EESC considers it essential to develop fleet modernisation and renewal plans aimed at improving energy efficiency, safety and working conditions without increasing fishing capacity.

The Committee welcomes the European Commission's intention to establish a simple architecture without overly prescriptive rules. It urges the creation of swift procedures for low-budget aid and calls for a level playing field in access to funding across EU nations and regions. The Committee also advocates for the adoption of harmonised, cross-sectoral guidelines on the '*do no significant harm*' principle, ensuring that it supports fleet modernisation.

Legal certainty for fishers

The opinion also highlights the need to strengthen legal certainty for beneficiaries. The EESC opposes the requirement to recover aid several years after it has been granted due to serious infringements, arguing that this undermines the *non bis in idem* principle, creates legal uncertainty and leads to underutilisation of funds. It also supports aligning future aid schemes with the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and calls for maintaining the spirit of the current EMFAF: *everything that is not explicitly prohibited, should be considered permitted*.

Through these recommendations, the EESC seeks to ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework fully recognises the strategic importance of European fisheries for food security, the cohesion of coastal communities and the imperative need for EU sustainable production model.

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