

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the ‘Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (recast)’

(COM(2015) 294 final — 2015/0133 (COD))

(2016/C 013/29)

Rapporteur working alone: Brian CURTIS

On 2 July 2015 and 6 July 2015 respectively, the Council and the European Parliament decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Articles 43(2) and 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on the:

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (recast)

(COM(2015) 294 final — 2015/0133 (COD)).

The Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, which was responsible for preparing the Committee’s work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 2 September 2015.

At its 510th plenary session, held on 16 and 17 September 2015 (meeting of 16 September), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 141 votes in favour with 2 abstentions.

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. The EESC agrees in general with the Commission intent of building onto those things that work well, therefore maintaining a large degree of continuity, whilst at the same time responding to the new requirements, and considers that the proposed changes do not go beyond what is necessary and appropriate for the achievement of the basic objective of improving data quality, access and availability in the fisheries sector.

1.2. Data availability is the area where most progress should be made. The process through which end users request data from Member States (‘data calls’) is too burdensome and resource-intensive; accessibility to fishing activity data varies across Member States due to differing access rules, based in part on limitations of the multi-purpose use of these data; Data Collection Framework (DCF) data are underutilised due to difficulties in accessing them, leading to great opportunities lost in the potential use of these data and to unnecessary investments when collecting the same data for other purposes (e.g. in maritime spatial policies). The revision of the DCF is an opportunity to, on the one hand, ensure better availability of fisheries data to a wider circle of interested parties and, on the other hand, reduce the burden of data requests on Member States by using the most recent technical developments.

1.3. Improvements in quality and reliability still need to be achieved. One way to guarantee a high quality of data will be to apply the European Statistics Code of Practice and the Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System.

2. Background

2.1. An EU framework for the collection and management of fisheries data was established in 2000 ⁽¹⁾, and then reformed in 2008 resulting in the Data Collection Framework (DCF) ⁽²⁾. The DCF represented major progress in establishing a harmonised set of EU rules governing the collection of biological, environmental, technical and socioeconomic data on the fishing, aquaculture and processing sectors.

2.2. At the adoption of the 2013 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) ⁽³⁾, the Council and the European Parliament requested the Commission to fast track a proposal to amend the DCF in order that the principles and objectives for data collection that are essential to support the reformed CFP can be given practical effect as early as possible. The present proposal is intended to reach this objective through strengthening regional cooperation and adjusting to new data needs.

2.2.1. The DCF is to be aligned with the needs arising from the new CFP Regulation: the gradual move to Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), the impacts of fisheries on ecosystems (e.g. protected species, seabed habitats), the environmental and other impacts of aquaculture (illustrated by information on mortality/losses or use of medicines) and the effects of the landing obligation.

2.2.2. The revision of the DCF should also ensure that data are collected according to a cost/benefit or a cost/use analysis of the precision obtained by scientific models and the associated level of risk (for example, instead of conducting surveys every year, doing them every three years). Such an analysis should be based on a discussion between the fisheries managers, the data collectors and the providers of scientific advice.

2.3. The Commission proposal aims to align the DCF and other relevant EU legislation relating to fisheries data collection so as to remove overlaps and therefore reduce the cost of the entire system of marine data. A separate, dedicated impact assessment has not been deemed necessary because the DCF was subjected to the impact assessment for the CFP since the intention was clear that the DCF should be a part of it.

3. Comments

3.1. The DCF is too complex, both the legal framework and in terms of implementation arrangements. One source of complexity and inefficiency is the duplication between data requirements covered by the DCF and other EU legislation such as the control regulation ⁽⁴⁾ and the specific statistical regulations ⁽⁵⁾. The fact that the same raw data has to be sent in differently aggregated forms to different end users is another source of complexity and inefficiency.

3.2. The legal setup of the DCF is excessively prescriptive and detailed, resulting in a system which is cumbersome and insufficiently responsive to evolving needs. It is therefore necessary to incorporate end users in the elaboration of the data requirements to ensure that these respond to their needs.

3.3. Another area of interest is the need to increase synergies with the objectives of other EU policies. This is primarily the case for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Brussels, 16 September 2015.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Henri MALOSSE

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 176, 15.7.2000, p. 1.
⁽²⁾ OJ L 60, 5.3.2008, p. 1.
⁽³⁾ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.
⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.
⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 218, 13.8.2008, p. 1.
OJ L 403, 30.12.2006, p. 1.
OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 1.
OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 42.
OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 70.
OJ L 97, 9.4.2008, p. 13.