

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending for the second time Regulation (EC) No 850/98 of 30 March 1998 for the conservation of fishery resources through technical measures for the protection of juveniles of marine organisms' ⁽¹⁾

(1999/C 138/08)

On 23 March 1999 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Articles 43 and 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the above-mentioned proposal.

The Economic and Social Committee decided to appoint Mr Chagas as rapporteur-general for its opinion.

At its 362nd plenary session (meeting of 24 March 1999), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 60 votes to four, with 10 abstentions.

1. Introduction

1.1. With Regulation (EC) 850/98, the Council adopted technical measures for the protection of juvenile marine organisms.

1.2. Provision was made in that regulation for complementary measures to be adopted by 4 May 1999 at the latest on rules for the use of mesh-size combinations.

1.3. The present proposal for a regulation amends Regulation 850/98 in the aforementioned respects; it introduces new provisions to facilitate controls, by making use of the logbook mandatory to note application of these rules and also any transboundary fishing.

2. General comments

2.1. The ESC approves the present proposal for a Regulation.

2.2. The Committee stresses that the resource conservation policy is necessary to ensure that fisheries develop smoothly as a profitable, competitive sector.

2.3. For technical conservation measures to be effective, they must be simple, workable and enforceable, and, if possible, tested inter alia by professionals in the sector.

2.4. The Committee has also recommended that the technical conservation measures must be supported by scientific and technological developments; for this reason it has advocated further research into fishing techniques, not just to find out more about the performance of current methods, but also — and above all — to allow more selective fishing gear to be introduced which prevents fish being discarded or juveniles being caught.

2.5. It is also clear that there is no point to the conservation and resource-management policy, or the series of instruments which comprise it, unless the rules are complied with. Dialogue to this effect with Member States' governments and professionals in the fisheries sector is therefore essential. Against this background, control has a key role to play: it must be effective and uniformly applied throughout the EU.

2.6. The Committee therefore has misgivings about how feasible it is for professionals, while fishing is actually being carried out, to implement the provisions set out in the new Article 4(4)(b). The ESC also has doubts about the feasibility of monitoring these new provisions.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 11, 15.1.1999, p. 9.

Brussels, 24 March 1999.

The President
of the Economic and Social Committee
Beatrice RANGONI MACHIAVELLI