

# Press Release

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## **EU fisheries controls: more efforts needed, say Auditors**

**More efforts are needed if the EU is to have an effective fisheries control system in place, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. The auditors say that Member States and the European Commission have made progress over the last decade; however, the EU does not yet have a sufficiently effective system of fisheries controls to support the Common Fisheries Policy.**

The auditors visited four Member States: Spain, France, Italy and the UK (Scotland). None of the four had sufficiently verified the accuracy of their fishing fleets' capacity or the information on the vessels in their fleet registers. None had verified the tonnage of their fishing vessels, and two had not verified engine power. Additionally, the auditors found significant discrepancies between vessel details in the fleet register and those in supporting documents.

Overall, say the auditors, the Member States examined were implementing fisheries management measures adequately. Satellite-based vessel tracking systems provided powerful information for monitoring and controlling fishing activities. But as a result of exemptions provided by the Control Regulation, 89% of the EU fleet was not monitored, which hindered effective management in some fisheries and for some species.

*"Member States have not yet fully implemented the EU's fisheries control regulation," said Mr Janusz Wojciechowski, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report, "and some of the regulations need modifying if Member States are to control their fisheries effectively."*

The Member States managed the uptake of their fishing quotas well. But when they allowed producer organisations to manage quota distribution, they did not always know which criteria were used. This lack of transparency made it difficult to identify the actual beneficiaries of fishing opportunities, to assess any potential adverse impact on the environment and local economies, and to take corrective measures where appropriate. The auditors did also see examples of good practice, where professional fisheries organisations required their members to comply with additional, but more focused, conservation measures beyond those of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Data on fishing activities collected within the framework of the Control Regulation was not sufficiently complete and reliable. Catch data for vessels making paper-based declarations – a significant portion of the EU fleet – was incomplete and often incorrectly recorded, say the auditors. There were significant discrepancies between declared landings and subsequent records of first sale. Two of the four Member

**The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu).**

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States visited did not sufficiently share and trace information concerning activities of vessels from one flag Member State in another. Member States' data validation processes were insufficient. In addition, there were significant differences between the overall catch data recorded by the Member States and that available to the Commission.

In general, the Member States visited planned and carried out fisheries inspections well. However, inspectors did not have real-time access to information about vessels, which reduced the effectiveness of inspections, and, although standardised inspection procedures were established, they were not always used. Inspection results were not always correctly reported, and the sanctions applied were not always a sufficient deterrent. The points system, a key innovation to ensure equal treatment of fishing operators, was applied differently across Member States and even within Member States.

The auditors make a number of recommendations to the Commission and to the Member States, aimed at improving the reliability of information on fishing fleets, the monitoring of fisheries management measures, the reliability of fisheries data, and inspections and sanctions.

#### **Note to Editors**

The EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) aims to ensure that fish stocks and the fishing sector are sustainable in the long term. Many stocks are still overfished, so continued efforts are necessary to manage fisheries effectively. The CFP therefore includes measures to restrict fishing fleet capacity and manage fisheries by imposing limits on catches, such as quotas, and fishing activity such as fishing effort restrictions or technical rules for certain fisheries.

The success of the CFP requires the design and implementation of an effective system of control. The control system was last reformed in 2009, to correct serious weaknesses which had been identified by the ECA in its special report No 7/2007.

Special Report No 8/2017: "EU fisheries controls: more efforts needed" is available on the ECA website ([eca.europa.eu](http://eca.europa.eu)) in 23 EU languages.