**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the challenges and opportunities for the fishing sector in the Black Sea**

1. **Rapporteur:** Ivo HRISTOV (S&D / BG)
2. **Reference numbers:** 2019/2159 (INI) / A9-0170/2021 / P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0307
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 23 June 2021
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Fisheries (PECH)
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

This resolution analyses the challenges and opportunities for the fishing sector in the Black Sea. More particularly, it acknowledges the status of key commercial stocks, the trade aspects and the contribution of fisheries to the regional and local economies of the Black Sea. In addition, it calls upon the Member States to support the sector through their European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)[[1]](#footnote-1) Operational Programmes and activities promoting awareness on fisheries sustainability and fish consumption while it stresses environmental and climate change impacts.

The resolution also contains calls for action to the Commission in the following areas: establishment of multi-annual management plans, improvement of the state of the stocks due to overfishing, and implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy in the Black Sea paying particular attention to how coastal Member States used the 2014-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)[[2]](#footnote-2) to ensure that stocks were managed sustainably and that biodiversity was improved.

1. **Response to the requests in the resolution and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The Commission welcomes the resolution and fully acknowledges the importance of the issues raised. Many of the points mentioned are at the centre of the Common Fisheries Policy and of the 2018 Sofia Ministerial Declaration[[3]](#footnote-3), which shaped the new fisheries governance in the Black Sea. This was subsequently reinforced with the new strategy for the next decade (2021-2030) of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)[[4]](#footnote-4), which was adopted on 9 July. Fisheries sustainability and sustainable development of aquaculture through enhanced cooperation among the Black Sea countries is a fundamental element of this new fisheries governance. The GFCM will organise a dedicated Conference for the Black Sea in 2022. The implementation of the Sofia Ministerial declaration, by all contracting parties, will be assessed on that occasion (par. 2).

With regard to the state of the Black Sea stocks of major economic importance (paragraphs 1 to 24), the Commission points to the numerous efforts undertaken to strengthen regional cooperation in fisheries and the numerous measures adopted at regional level within the GFCM, most of them for the first time in the Black Sea, such as the multiannual management plan for turbot, an emblematic species with high commercial value that was suffering from overexploitation and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.

The implementation of the new fisheries governance has led to significant advancements on data collection, fisheries research (for instance the first ever regional research plan for rapa whelk fisheries), including surveys at sea, improvement of the scientific advice essential for sound management decisions, improvement of fisheries knowledge and scientific capacity building through the exemplary regional project, the GFCM BlackSea4Fish project[[5]](#footnote-5) to which the EU is the exclusive financing donor.

Fisheries management has been complemented with enhanced fisheries control and monitoring. The fight against IUU fishing has been strengthened with the turbot joint control and inspection pilot scheme under the assistance of the European Fisheries Control Agency. This is a novelty for the Black Sea.

Fisheries management and conservation of marine resources has been strengthened with multiannual management plans (i.e. GFCM turbot multiannual management plan[[6]](#footnote-6)). Interactions between fisheries and the marine environment and protection of vulnerable species are key elements for the work towards shaping future measures. Despite the good progress made, more efforts are needed. To this end, the EU is working on further measures. For example, it is driving the GFCM work on new multiannual management plans and conservation measures, on interaction between fisheries and the environment and climatic effects, and on the protection of vulnerable species and bycatches.

Within the EU, an autonomous quotas system was applied since 2008 to the key commercial stocks of turbot and sprat. For the latter, it is still applied while for turbot a regional TAC and quotas regime has been set at the GFCM level and is annually transposed in the EU fishing opportunities Regulation.

Concerning the trade of Black Sea fish products (paragraphs 25 to 30), the Commission strongly favours and works towards the implementation of the GFCM Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSF)[[7]](#footnote-7) in order to improve access to markets, safety on board and training for fishers as well as to enhance the role of women in fisheries. The social dimension of Black Sea fisheries is important and future work should concentrate in particular on the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries and on the livelihoods of coastal communities, ensuring decent working conditions and social protection for fishers, to create opportunities for the youth and to value the role of women. Unfortunately, the work of women is still often invisible and their efforts should be fairly compensated.

The environment, biodiversity and climate change (paragraphs 41 to 9) and their interactions with fisheries are cornerstones of both the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the new GFCM fisheries governance in the Black Sea. The CFP Basic Regulation[[8]](#footnote-8) and the Technical Measures Regulation[[9]](#footnote-9) have set a comprehensive framework and numerous measures adopted by the GFCM have consistently provided effective tools to minimise such impacts. However, there is a need to advance further on vulnerable species and bycatches and also on the climatic effects to fisheries. The Commission is working on proposing concrete measures to tackle such challenges at the next GFCM annual session in November 2021.

Under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)[[10]](#footnote-10), the Member States – including Romania and Bulgaria - have established strategies and programs of measures to reach the ‘Good environmental Status’ (GES) of their waters. They also have to develop a monitoring network notably to assess whether GES is met in their waters. EU funds were made available to support the implementation of the MSFD. Regional cooperation is also encouraged in the MSFD with a recognition of the important role of the Regional Seas Conventions.

Regarding the funding for research on the state of Black Sea shad (paragraph 57), the Commission notes the possibility for the Member States to promote actions under the EMFF improving marine data and knowledge, data collection and data management systems (including the implementation of pilot studies to improve existing data collection and data management systems).

With regard to the protection status of Sturgeon species under the Habitats Directive (paragraph 58), in light of the conclusions of the fitness check evaluation of the Nature Directives the Commission does not have any plans to propose amendments of the Habitats Directive, including its annexes. The current listing of some Sturgeon species under Annex V of the directive already requires Member States to ensure that they achieve favourable conservation status and to monitor progress towards attaining this objective. The Commission works closely with the Member States on Sturgeon conservation and EU funds have supported several related projects. An ongoing pilot project assesses technical solutions for making the Iron Gates dams on the border between Romania and Serbia passable to sturgeon species in order to open a migration route to the Middle Danube Basin.

The Commission notes that it works actively with the relevant Members States on the fulfilment of the CFP objectives in the Black Sea (paragraph 61). In addition, the Commission has engaged in a successful strategy to address fisheries conservation issues at international level in this area, through work under the GFCM. The Commission also notes that EMFF 2014 – 2020 funds are used from both Black Sea Member States to improve their fisheries management and support CFP implementation.

1. Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004, OJ L 247, 13.07.2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council, L 149, 20.5.2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/meetings/blackseaconference2018/sofiadeclaration/en/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. GFCM Strategy 2030 for the sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea- <https://gfcmsitestorage.blob.core.windows.net/website/4.Publications/GFCM%202030%20STRATEGY_FINAL.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/activities/fisheries/blacksea4fish/ru/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29) and Recommendation GFCM/43/2019/3 amending Recommendation GFCM/41/2017/4 on a multiannual management plan for turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (geographical subarea 29) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.fao.org/gfcm/meetings/ssf2018/rpoassf/en/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC, OJ L 354, 28.2.2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005, L 198, 25.07.2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (the Marine Strategy Framework Directive), OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)