

# MEPs demand uniform rules and sanctions throughout the EU

EU fisheries rules should be applied uniformly to all EU fishermen so that they are treated fairly, say MEPs in a resolution voted on Tuesday.

Inspection procedures on the net mesh sizes and catches should be standardized as should penalties for infringements, the MEPs point out.

Introducing an EU “core curriculum” for training all fisheries inspectors, and using compatible real-time communication technologies EU wide, would also help improve fairness, the text adds.

The non-legislative resolution, approved by 581 votes to 59, with 48 abstentions, comes ahead of the upcoming revision of the Control System Council Regulation expected in 2017.

“The same legislation currently seems to be applied differently from country to country. This raises the question of how effective the legislation is and how credible the EU is. Legislation should apply to everybody and it is not acceptable that it does not apply equally to everyone”, said rapporteur Isabelle Thomas (S&D, FR).

MEPs say huge differences in national control methods and disparities between inspection sites result in “discriminatory” controls, as some countries do checks at every stage, from fishing gear to the consumer’s plate, whereas others check only certain links in the chain. Sanctions also vary across the EU, as for the same infringement, an administrative penalty may be imposed in one country but a penal one in another.

Parliament recommends expanding checks to cover the entire production chain, assigning responsibility for control at sea to a single administrative body in each country so as to prevent overlaps, and standardising sanctions. MEPs say they prefer economic sanctions, including temporary suspensions of fishing activity, to penal ones.

As to inspectors’ training, the resolution calls on the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and national training bodies to introduce a uniform European “core curriculum” for training fisheries inspectors.

New monitoring and real-time information transmission and communication technologies are essential for maritime surveillance and should be made technically compatible across all EU countries, says the text.

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