

***For immediate release***

## **Fishing opportunities must reflect the realities of stock recovery**

The European Commission has today published its annual consultation paper on the state of fish stocks and the preparation for setting fish quotas for 2015. This is the first fishing opportunities consultation paper since the reform of the CFP, whose new rules will cause upheaval for the sector and may involve changes to the total allowable catch.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat emphasised that fishermen are already under pressure, stating: *“Fishing opportunities for 2015 will be set against the backdrop of the new Common Fisheries Policy. It will be a challenging period of adjustment for our fishermen to adapt to the new objective. For instance, we will see an end to discarding fish overboard and a commitment to restore stocks to levels above maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2020 at the latest.”*

Europêche believes that there must be room for flexibility in order to achieve these core objectives within the next 6 years. Any significant cut in quota will affect the long term profitability of the sector and given this apparent stock recovery, would be unjustifiable. Europêche urges that opportunities must be better adapted to the state of the stocks given that scientific knowledge is constantly improving<sup>1</sup>. According to the [Commission communication](#), 27 stocks are already fished at levels corresponding to MSY, compared to 2 in 2003.

Garat is also optimistic about the present state of European fish stocks, adding: *“It is important to mention here that we are experiencing a huge improvement in fish stocks. In fact, the number of overfished stocks has reduced from 32 in 2005 to 19 in 2014 and the number of stocks within safe biological limits has almost doubled in the last decade.”*

The Commission acknowledges the improved situation in many stocks in the North East Atlantic, including among others, mackerel, northern hake and most stocks of herring in the North Sea, Celtic Sea, Irish Sea and the West of Scotland. In addition, saithe, plaice, haddock and nephrops in the Skagerrak are fished at levels consistent with MSY. Blue fin tuna stocks in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea have also grown in recent years with reports that fishermen in the Mediterranean are exhausting their quota in a matter of hours.

The document is now open to Member States, the fishing industry and Regional Advisory Councils to submit their recommendations via the online public consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> Facts and figures on the Common Fisheries Policy Basic statistical data 2014 EDITION. In the Atlantic and adjacent waters, the number of data-poor stocks has decreased from 61 in 2011 to 41 in 2013. Fishing can therefore be better adapted to the state of stocks.