Ref.: 191/2017 Rome, 22 June 2017

MEDAC OPINION ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE FISHERIES SECTOR IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

During the meeting held in Ajaccio (October 2016) MEDAC WG5 was informed on the research carried out by the Fondazione Metes on the socio-economic situation of the Mediterranean fisheries sector with reference to the following Member States: Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, utilizing information from the STECF ("The 2016 Annual Report on the EU Fishing Fleet"). On the basis of the available indicators provided by the Member States the research highlighted how a reduction in catches, incentives to for decommissioning vessels, unchanged profit levels in recent years, increased management costs and the import of non-European products have negatively affected employment levels throughout the Mediterranean basin. However, it should also be highlighted that this situation goes alongside the critical state of fish stock in this region, where over 90% of the assessed stocks are overexploited. While for other EU region, where an overall improvement in profitability of the EU fleet has been reported, it coincided with an increase in the number of fish stocks being fished at rates consistent with the objective of achieving MSY and an associated increase in biomass of such stocks, as reported by STECF[1].

On the basis of the data that was referred to in this study, the trend regarding both the employment levels and the number of vessels was negative (-14% and -8% respectively from 2008 to 2014), small-scale fisheries was particularly affected, here the decline was -16% in vessel numbers and -13% in employment in the same period. These numbers are highly significant if we consider that small-scale fisheries involve a considerable percentage of the vessels present in the Mediterranean.

MEDAC therefore considers it essential to take this aspect into due consideration in the next multiannual management plans, in assessing which measures to put in place to support fishing enterprises and workers in an overall approach that links conservation of resources with the livelihood and socio-economic sustainability of the coastal communities.

[1] The Eu Fishing Fleet Trends And Economic Results Fisheries DG Mare Economic Papers N° 03/2017

info@med-ac.eu
+39 06.48.91.36.24 T
+39 06.60.51.32.59 F

med-ac.eu
Via Nazionale, 243
00184 Roma (Italy)

Co-funded by the European Union

MEDAC - Registered Office/Siège Social/Sede Legale Via Nazionale, 243 - 00184 Roma (Italy) - Tax identification number/Numéro d'identification fiscal/Codice Fiscale 97534810581

It is therefore necessary to address the problem transversally. MEDAC underlines that the issue of employment and that of resource conservation need to be analysed and studied simultaneously in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of both. Productive activities cannot exist without the resources and there can be no resources without raising environmental awareness and socio-economic support. These two elements are an integral part of the debates taking place at the MEDAC meetings. Solutions such as adopting scientifically sound and ecosystem-based multiannual plans, have been proved to restore stock biomass and provide economic benefits to the fishing sector, while mismanagement of fish stocks can lead to heavy social impacts that generate unemployment. In line with the EESC's opinion on "Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multi-annual plan for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks"[2], MEDAC highlights need for adequate economic and social impact assessment, considering both short and long-term effects, and measures to offset the effects of the multi-annual plan on businesses and jobs. In the meanwhile, MEDAC believes that it would be perilous to contemplate stopping or reducing a productive activity, leaving the management of the social consequences in the hands of the businesses themselves and their workers; in the meantime, it is necessary to intervene to safeguard fishery enterprises and workers.

Bearing all these reasons in mind, MEDAC considers it necessary for these issues to be discussed both directly by DG Employment, DG Environment and DG MARE as well as the national administrations involved in resource protection. In the first case, the involvement of DG Employment could help manage the critical periods that arise when fishing activities are reduced, DG Environment would help to integrate pollution, climate change and other non-fishery related impact mitigation measures into MAPs, whilst with the participation of the states concerned, it may be possible to share income support solutions such as re-education/training courses and diversification of activities, particularly in those areas where specific decisions have to be made to support the resources and the foreseeable effects include negative socioeconomic consequences. MEDAC proposes the use of funds provided by the EMFF, alternatively actions by the individual states involved could be considered with the collaboration of DG Employment and DG Environment.

[2] NAT/705 Multiannual plan for small pelagic fisheries in the Adriatic Sea

MEDAC also highlights that better-quality data and a wider range of indicators would help to face socio-economic issues in a more exhaustive way.

In conclusion, therefore, MEDAC proposes raising awareness of possible joint actions by DG Employment and DG MARE, as well as greater involvement of the countries involved, so as to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic impact of the management measures proposed to protect fishery resources and also employment levels.