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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the application of Council Regulation (EC) 1224/2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy as required under Article 118 for the period 2020-2024

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1. Introduction and background

Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009[1] ('the Control Regulation') provides for an EU fisheries-control system to ensure compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy[2] (CFP). Together with the regulation on illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing[3] and with the regulation on the sustainable management of external fleet[4], the Control Regulation lays down rules and measures for control, inspection, and enforcement based on a global and integrated approach. The Control Regulation is a fundamental pillar of the CFP that provides a comprehensive set of tools to ensure it is implemented fully and effectively.

The governance and implementation of the fisheries-control system in the EU involves the Member States, the European Commission, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)[5] and commercial operators. The Control Regulation applies to the whole chain of fishing activities from the net to the plate.

This document fulfils the legal requirement for the Commission to report to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of the Control Regulation in the Member States every five years (Article 118(2) of the Control Regulation).

In 2017 and 2021, the Commission adopted the reports on the implementation and evaluation of the Control Regulation covering the 5-year periods, 2010-2014 and 2015-2019[6]. The reports showed that the Control Regulation is essential for achieving the CFP's objectives and for enforcing conservation and management measures. The principles and provisions of the Control Regulation were intended to tackle issues that have led in the past to poor compliance with fisheries rules and extensive overfishing. However, audits and verifications performed by the Commission have identified significant shortcomings concerning the implementation of essential EU rules. These shortcomings could jeopardise the achievement of the long-term objectives of the CFP. Besides, although the Control Regulation helped to improve both the fisheries-control system and compliance with the CFP rules, it was not entirely fit for purpose (see Section 3.1). To help address the shortcomings identified, the Commission adopted a proposal to revise the EU's fisheries-control system[7]. The amending regulation was adopted in

1 OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1

2 OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22

3 OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1

4 OJ L 347, 28.12.2017, p. 81

5 https://www.efca.europa.eu

6 COM(2017)192 final, COM(2021)316 final

7 COM(2018)368 final

2023[8] ('the revised Control Regulation'). Many of the amendments introduced by the 2023 revision apply only from January 2026 and therefore are not taken into consideration for this reporting exercise. Since the revised Control Regulation entered into force, the Commission has prioritised the preparation and adoption of the necessary secondary legislation. This will mainly take place after the reporting period, however[9].

The adoption of the revised Control Regulation represents a major policy development over the covered period. It is a crucial step towards more effective, modern, and consistent control in support of fisheries management. It addresses long-standing weaknesses in the collection of data on catches and vessel activities through the expanded use of digital recording systems and remote electronic monitoring (REM), significantly improving accuracy and transparency and creating a level playing field. Through digitalisation, the revised framework aims to strengthen implementation of the landing obligation and support compliance with conservation objectives. It has also introduced more structured and digital monitoring of vessels below 12 metres in length overall (LOA) and recreational fishing through digital catch registration systems and has improved the sanctioning system and the conditions for its implementation in and across Member States. It has promoted administrative simplification and cost reduction, in particular by replacing paper-based procedures with digital solutions, benefiting both authorities and operators.

This third report provides an overview of the application of the core provisions of the Control Regulation for the period 2020-2024. The information presented comes from: (i) the data reported by Member States under Article 118 of the Control Regulation[10]; (ii) information from audits, verifications and inspections; and (iii) discussions held in expert groups on fisheries control and on compliance.

2. Implementation of the Control Regulation by Member States

Member States are responsible for ensuring implementation of the fisheries-control system. In 2020-2024, Member States continued to improve the implementation of the Control Regulation, although significant shortcomings were identified in several Member States over the reporting period, particularly with regard to essential provisions on weighing and catch registration. These points are covered in greater detail below.

8 Regulation (EU) 2023/2842

9 Except for the act on the listing of ports to benefit of the derogation to the margin of tolerance: Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1474 of 24 May 2024 laying down rules for the application of Article 14(4), point (a), of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 as regards derogation from the margin of tolerance in estimating catches for unsorted landings and transhipments from small pelagic, industrial and tropical tuna purse seiners fisheries

10 An extensive and detailed summary of data reported by Member States is provided in the Synopsis Report of data reported by Member States according to Article 118 of the Control Regulation, available at Publications Office of the EU together with the original reports submitted

2.1. Conditions for access to waters and resources and control of fleet management

Aligning fishing activities with the rules of the CFP, requires these activities to be carried out with a fishing licence and, when certain conditions apply, a fishing authorisation. During the reporting period, the total number of valid fishing licences reported by Member States decreased by 6%, from 72 562 in 2020 to 68 085 in 2024. Over the same period, Member States reported 1 669 fishing licences suspended temporarily and 6 368 permanently withdrawn. The number of fishing authorisations also decreased by 8%, from 35 128 in 2020 to 32 474 in 2024, with 99 suspended temporarily and 1 664 permanently withdrawn.

To ensure effective control, Member States must operate a vessel-monitoring system (VMS). Fishing vessels of 12 metres LOA or more must be equipped with a device that enables competent authorities to locate and identify them automatically. An analysis of the data reported shows that VMS coverage was at 98% for vessels exceeding 15 metres in 2020, dropping slightly to 96% in 2024. There was an increase in the number of vessels between 12 and 15 metres LOA equipped with VMS, from 36% in 2020 to 48% in 2024. Member States also reported an increase in the percentage of vessels exceeding 15 metres LOA equipped with automatic identification systems (AIS), from 80% in 2020 to 84% in 2024.

VMS is a crucial component in the monitoring and control of fishing activities, involving the use of satellite-based tracking systems to monitor the position and movement of fishing vessels. The revised Control Regulation has expanded the use of VMS to fleet categories that were not fully covered and introduced a lighter system for vessels of less than 12 metres LOA from 2028 onwards. Addressing the lack of coverage of this very large category of vessels is a significant achievement. The revised Control Regulation has also specified how data collected by VMS and other tracking systems should be reported and used by authorities for control and inspection purposes.

A key element of the EU's fisheries control system is the control of engine power. Engine power and gross tonnage are the two capacity indicators managed through the entry/exit scheme, with the CFP setting limits for both. Managing fleet capacity, including the entry/exit scheme for the EU's fishing-fleet register, therefore relies on the precise and reliable recording of these parameters. Following the identification of the shortcomings in Member States' engine power control systems, revealed by the 2019 Commission study[11], the Commission initiated dialogues with Member States, including 15 pre-infringement dialogues. Many Member States have stepped up their efforts to fulfil the obligation to certify and verify engine power. In response to requests for additional support, a technical working group was established in September 2022, composed of Member States' experts and supported by an external expert engine power expert, to follow-up on the conclusions of the 2019 study. The revised Control Regulation addresses the shortcomings identified. The requirement to continuously monitor for high-risk vessels' engine power takes effect on 10 January 2028.[12] The working group has developed technical specifications to help Member States to implement this requirement. These guidance documents are designed to help Member States prepare for their successful and timely implementation. Both guidance documents are publicly accessible through the Commission's

[11] Study on engine power verification by Member States – Final report, Publications Office, 2019

[12] Article 39a of Regulation (EU) 2023/2842

Publications Office[13], facilitating Member States' preparations for the new rules that take effect in 2028. Continuous liaising and information sharing aims to ensure readiness and compliance.

To improve monitoring of fleet data and capacity at EU level, the Commission maintains an EU fleet register[14]. This register includes a database that is partially accessible to the public.

2.2. Catch reporting tools, weighing and traceability

To facilitate effective monitoring, EU fishing vessels of 10 metres LOA or more are required to keep a fishing logbook. For vessels of 12 metres LOA or more this must be electronic (e-logbook), although, during the reporting period, an exemption permitted certain vessels between 12 and 15 metres LOA to use a paper-logbook[15]. The data show a general trend towards decreasing use of paper-logbooks. The percentage of vessels exceeding 12 metres LOA that had an e-logbook was 94% in 2020 and over 95% in 2024. The percentage of vessels between 10 metres and 12 metres LOA that used e-logbooks also rose from 49% in 2020 to 66% in 2024.

Monitoring of catches for vessels below 10 metres LOA had to be carried out by means of sampling plans, paper-logbooks, or sales notes. The proportion of vessels subject to each of these monitoring methods was quite stable throughout the reporting period, varying by just a few percentage points over the years. Sampling plans were the most frequently used type of monitoring method. In addition to these forms of control, the use of e-logbooks rose from 537 in 2020 to 1 743 in 2024, a 225% increase.

The revised Control Regulation will support this trend, by gradually extending the use of e-logbooks to all vessels of all sizes.

The accurate weighing and registration of catches is the foundation of fisheries management. Weighing and catch registration are essential for control purposes, scientific data, monitor quota uptake and prevent overfishing. During the reporting period, many verifications of weighing and catch registration were carried out by the Commission in Member States across several sea basins. In many cases the findings of the Commission's evaluations confirmed considerable shortcomings in weighing and catch registration, particularly for sorted and unsorted catches in the Baltic Sea, North Sea and Western Waters. Many of these shortcomings are long-standing issues that had been identified in previous Commission evaluations. Situations vary from one Member State to another, but the shortcomings detected include weighing on non-approved systems, failure to weigh all fishery products, failure to de-water

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[13] European Commission: Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and Roos Diesel Analysis B.V, Technical guidance for the monitoring, certification and verification of engine power in EU fisheries control – *Developed by the technical working group on engine power, subgroup of the expert group on fisheries control*, European Commission, 2025

European Commission: Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and Roos Diesel Analysis B.V, European Commission, 2025, Technical specifications and guidance for the implementation of devices for the continuous monitoring of catching vessels' engine power

[14] EU fishing fleet register

[15] Until 10 January 2026 Member States could exempt vessels of between 12 metres and 15 metres LOA that: (a) operate exclusively within the territorial seas of the flag Member State; or (b) never spend more than 24 hours at sea from the time of departure to the return to port

and de-ice catches before weighing, non-compliant deductions from the results of weighing, lack of effective control and enforcement and arbitrary post-weighing catch registration. These shortcomings undermine the achievements of the CFP's objectives and, in some cases, contribute to the decline in the biological status of stocks. The Commission has worked with the Member States concerned to discuss follow-up actions, including by establishing action plans to remedy the issues identified.

The revised Control Regulation will also help to address this situation. It requires weighing to be done by authorised operators using systems approved by Member States. The derogations from the requirement for weighing all catches at landing before transport, through sampling, control, and common control programmes, remain in place but they will be harmonised by the Commission through secondary legislation.

Despite progress in terms of traceability, concerns persist, as Member States continue to explore various solutions to ensure the traceability of fishery products. Varying degrees of progress have been made in implementing long-standing traceability requirements for fishery products, adhering to regulatory frameworks that aim to ensure product origin transparency and accountability throughout the supply chain for fresh and frozen products. Some Member States have adopted digital systems for recording and tracking fishery products from their catch points to retail, thereby improving traceability and compliance.

Several Member States have reported that traceability systems are integrated into national fisheries information systems, enabling efficient digital tracking of fishery products. Digital platforms enable data entry at each supply chain stage—from fishers reporting catches to processing and distribution using unique identifiers or QR codes to maintain complete records accessible for verification.

Meanwhile, other Member States have introduced technological improvements such as mobile applications and software specifically designed to improve traceability. These tools facilitate information sharing among fisheries operators, inspectors, and buyers, and support in-depth monitoring during inspections, enabling real-time report generation to ensure supply chain integrity. Challenges remain, particularly in achieving full compliance across the supply chain, with standardisation needed in retail and wholesale sectors. Some Member States are hesitant to enforce comprehensive compliance until consistency is achieved across the EU, noting disparities in technology adoption and policy enforcement. Multinational companies also have difficulty aligning operations across borders, underscoring the need for harmonised regulations.

The revised Control Regulation will help to address these concerns. It has gradually introduced digitalisation for existing traceability requirements and extended these requirements to fresh and frozen products from 2029 onwards, subject to more detailed rules to be adopted through secondary legislation.

2.3. Specific control inspection programmes (SCIPs)

The specific control and inspection programmes (SCIPs) adopted by the Commission for six EU sea basins[16] have been implemented by the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and Member States at national level. EFCA has ensured the operational coordination of inspection activities at regional level through joint deployment plans (JDPs). The total number of inspections carried out by Member States and EFCA as part of JDPs from 2020 to 2024 was more than 230 000, with more than 45 000 inspections carried out in 2024. The percentage of suspected[17] infringements by operators for both sea- and land-based inspections was an average of 8%, with averages across years and sea basins ranging from 2% to more than 50%[18]. Most of the suspected infringements by operators identified during the JDP sea- and land-based inspections related to misreporting of catches and non-compliance with rules on technical measures. In 2024, suspected infringements by operators related to misreporting accounted for more than 40% of the total number of suspected infringements in all areas except in the Mediterranean Sea. Mis-reporting infringements reached almost 80% of suspected infringements by operators in the Baltic Sea and rose to 50% in the JDPs for the Western Waters of the North-East Atlantic. In the Mediterranean JDP, suspected infringements related to non-compliance by operators with rules on technical measures and misreporting accounted for 30% of all suspected infringements, with the remaining 70% of suspected infringements relating to non-compliance with other rules or traceability[19].

In recent years, fisheries control has benefited from the use of new technologies, such as earth-observation technologies. Through cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), EFCA provides a maritime picture to the Commission and Member States authorities (information management system) and EFCA used satellite remote sensing for vessel detection, target identification, and other specific monitoring tasks.

2.4. Control of the landing obligation

The landing obligation, which came into force fully in January 2019, is one of the core parts of the CFP. Since its phased introduction began in January 2015, Member States have made little progress in controlling and enforcing its application. The Commission has done a number of audits to evaluate the measures adopted by Member States to ensure control and enforcement, of the landing obligation and the accurate documentation of all catches. The findings of these audits (in conjunction with other reports such as evaluation reports prepared by EFCA in cooperation with regional control expert groups[20] and Member State reports) have indicated that there is extensive, illegal and undocumented discarding of catches in several sea basins.

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16 The Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea; the Black Sea; the Baltic Sea; the North Sea and ICES division IIa; the Western Waters of North Eastern Atlantic and the Indian Ocean from 2024

17 The term 'suspected infringements' refers to infringements detected by an inspector and reported in the inspection report, before a decision is taken by the competent authority or by a judge

18 EFCA Annual Report for 2019.pdf

19 One Mediterranean Member State has performed a significant number of market inspections which at least partially explains this difference between the Mediterranean JDP and other JDPs

20 Compliance Evaluation - European Fisheries Control Agency

Infringement procedures were launched against five Member States for failing to adopt the necessary measures to ensure control and enforcement of the landing obligation. These infringement procedures were closed in 2024 in light of the provisions of the revised Control Regulation which introduced new rules aimed at strengthening the effective control and enforcement, of the landing obligation. These include improved and digitalised systems for catch recording and reporting, a stricter sanctioning system for cases of non-compliance, and mandatory installation by 10 January 2028 of operating remote electronic monitoring (REM) systems on board, including closed-circuit television (CCTV). They may also include other instruments and/or equipment, for catching vessels of 18 metres LOA or more that pose a high risk of non-compliance with the landing obligation.

REM, incorporating CCTV and sensors, has been shown to be the most cost-effective means for Member States to ensure control and enforcement of fishing activities at sea. In 2024, EFCA, in cooperation with Member States, updated its technical guidelines and minimum specifications for REM.[21].

In advance of the 2028 deadline, the Commission has been working with EFCA to develop a risk assessment methodology to determine the high-risk fleet segments for REM installation. Detailed rules on and technical specifications for REM installation and operation will be developed, taking EFCA's technical guidelines into account.

2.5. Inspections and enforcement

The number of people authorised by Member States to perform fisheries inspections remained stable from 13 449 in 2020 to 13 490 in 2024. It is difficult to assess any real increase in staff numbers dedicated to fisheries control because the powers of inspectors vary across Member States[22].

Member States reported a total of 367 227 inspections from 2020 to 2024. Comparing the ratio of inspections across the four main locations, 50% were performed in port/at landing, 25% at sea, 21% on the market, and 4.5% during transport.

Member States reported that 1 061 patrol vessels[23] were used for fisheries inspection in 2020, and 1 015 in 2024, with a total of over 115 000 patrol days at sea over the 2020-2024 reporting period, compared with the nearly 100 000 patrol days at sea reported for 2015-2019. Member States had also reported a total of 72 surveillance aircraft dedicated to fisheries control and surveillance by 2024, with a total of almost 33 000 surveillance hours during the five-year period. There has also been an increase in the use of new surveillance technologies. By 2024, seven Member States had reported the use of 56 drones, an increase from previous reporting when 39 devices were reported as operational by 2019.

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21 Technical guidelines and specifications for the implementation of Remote Elecctronic Monitoring (REM) in EU fisheries (2019) - European Fisheries Control Agency.pdf

22 A variety of national agents can be considered inspectors, ranging from specialised fisheries inspectors to police and agents working as customs officers

23 Single-purpose and multipurpose patrol vessels

In 2020-2024, Member States reported more than 551 500 suspected infringements by operators. The number of serious infringements showed a general upward trend, rising from about 1 445 in 2020 to 1 979 in 2024. On average, around 1 in 8 suspected infringements resulted in confirmed infringements.

The most common suspected infringements by operators were those related to fishing logbook and landing declaration (26%), traceability (25%), and fishing vessels not required to use a logbook or meet landing declaration requirements (8%). The number of suspected infringements under each title of the Control Regulation were: 53% for Title IV: Control of fisheries; 41% for Title V: Control of Marketing and 6% for Title III: General conditions for access to waters and resources.

In 2019, the Commission launched a study on Member States' sanctioning systems[24]. The objective was to provide an in-depth analysis and assessment of the functioning of national sanctioning systems, and on the sanctions applied by Member States for infringements between 2015 and 2019. The study found that the necessary legal framework in Member States was mostly complete and that many Member States had improved their legal framework compared with the previous five years. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted that in some Member States the implementation of the points system had been delayed or was not yet operational, along with other implementation shortcomings, such as the duration of proceedings for the sanctioning process and the level of sanctions imposed. These findings showed that although the situation improved in 2015-2019 compared with 2010-2014, more should have been done to ensure a level playing field and the effectiveness, dissuasiveness and proportionality of sanctions applied in each Member State. Based on the findings of the study and other relevant data, the Commission launched 15 dedicated pre-infringement dialogues with the Member States concerned. Account has to be taken of the substantive changes brought about by the revised Control Regulation, which, from 10 January 2026, further strengthen and harmonise Member States' enforcement and sanctioning systems for fisheries offences. These changes will help address the remaining weaknesses in enforcement by Member States, including by harmonising minimum administrative sanctions, expanding the list of serious infringements and strengthening existing rules on the points system for masters.

2.6 Data and information

Member States regularly report catch and effort data to the Commission. This allows to monitor total allowable catches and quota consumption. Ensuring data quality is a key element of the work by Member States and the Commission to improve quota monitoring, with data quality ensured by appropriate data validation and crosschecking. Regarding the obligation to establish an automated cross-check and data validation system, 8 out of 22 Member States have fully implemented automatic verifications and crosschecks. Most Member States have not yet fully implemented the automatic validation and crosschecking of fisheries data required under Article 109 of the Control Regulation. While most have established the necessary IT systems, many lack systematic, documented procedures to identify and follow up data anomalies, such

[24] Study on the sanctioning systems of Member States for infringements to the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy

as discrepancies in catch documentation and implausible catch data. Member States must take the necessary measures by 10 January 2027 to comply with the uniform conditions for data validation and cross-checking set out in Articles 49 to 52 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/2196. Three Member States currently operate partially automated crosschecks alongside manual verifications, while seven Member States have not yet established automated crosscheck systems.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of data exchange, in 2016 the Commission set a binding timetable for Member States to introduce the UN/FLUX (United Nations Fisheries Language for Universal eXchange) standard for fisheries data management. With the UN/FLUX standard, regional fisheries-management organisations and countries around the world can for the first time use a single, universal standard to automate the collection and dissemination of their fishery catch data. The standard is also harmonised with electronic data exchange standards in other sectors using UN/CEFACT (United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business) standards, e.g. for taxes and food traceability. During the reporting period, the Commission has worked intensively with the Member States, to ensure they implement UN/FLUX. The exchange system FLUX Transportation Layer (FLUX TL) is now operational in the Commission and in all the 23 Member States concerned. All exchanges of fisheries data take place using a central data-exchange platform hosted by DG MARE. This platform can also be used to send validated data and content in standard formats to the Commission. All Member States now exchange aggregated catch data, vessel position data and fleet data in UN/FLUX with the Commission.

3. Actions taken by the Commission

During the reporting period, the Commission continued to play a central role in supporting and overseeing the implementation of the Union fisheries control system. This included maintaining the structures that allow fisheries data to be exchanged, carrying out audits and verifications, giving Member States guidance, and convening expert groups to clarify technical aspects of the control rules. These actions strengthened the implementation of the Control Regulation and contributed to a more coherent and effective control system across the Union.

3.1. Legislation and policy development

A major development over the reporting period was the political agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council that led to the adoption of the revised Fisheries Control Regulation, in force since January 2024. The revision responds to long-standing challenges identified in evaluations, audits and stakeholder consultations, and reflects the recognition that effective control is essential for sustainable fisheries, fair competition and consumer trust.

The revision also takes new scientific and technological knowledge into account. It boosts the Union’s capacity to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in line with international commitments. Fair competition across Member States and equal treatment of operators are central to the revised system, which aligns definitions across CFP and food law and extends control rules to a wider range of activities and vessels. The revision has prioritised

simplification and alleviation of the administrative burden, largely through digitalisation and in a gradual way over five years.

The new framework introduces a comprehensive modernisation of control from net to plate. Digital reporting becomes the norm for all vessels, with e-logbooks, landing declarations and sales notes providing more complete and timely information. Vessel position data will be transmitted in real time and digital traceability will apply across the entire supply chain, including imported products, so that all fishery and aquaculture products can be tracked back to their source. The system expands monitoring to recreational and small-scale fisheries and requires better recording of incidental catches of sensitive species. It also strengthens rules on the return and reporting of end-of-life fishing gear to help limit marine litter.

Monitoring of the landing obligation can be improved through REM, including CCTV, for vessels exceeding 18 metres LOA assessed as high risk. The enforcement framework has been updated and simplified, with a clearer definition of serious infringements, a more harmonised and transparent point system, and improved national registers of infringements that support systematic information sharing. Together, these changes create a more consistent and predictable enforcement environment and make for greater trust in the CFP.

The revision also builds on the findings of the REFIT evaluation of the previous Control Regulation, which highlighted the need for simpler and more efficient rules. This focus on simplification is reflected throughout the new framework. The Commission has continued applying REFIT principles during the preparation of the secondary legislation, paying particular attention to simplification, proportionality and practical implementation. Many technical provisions will also be consolidated gradually and updated through a set of implementing and delegated acts, expected to reduce the number of existing articles and annexes in the implementing act of 2011[25] and provide clearer and more operational guidance. In line with the Commission's Better Regulation agenda, the revision reduces unnecessary administrative burden, replaces paper-based processes with digital tools, streamlines reporting and traceability requirements, and clarifies definitions and procedures to ensure greater legal certainty.

With the revised Control Regulation adopted, implementation becomes the focus. The Commission is preparing a comprehensive set of implementing and delegated acts to provide the necessary technical specifications for the phased application of the new rules in 2024, 2026[26], 2027 and 2028. The scope of these acts covers, amongst other things, detailed requirements for electronic reporting, digital traceability, geopositioning tools for smaller vessels, REM, and weighing and sampling procedures. The Commission has launched extensive consultations with Member States and stakeholders to ensure that the secondary legislation is operational, proportionate and consistent with risk-based control.

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[25] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 404/2011 of 8 April 2011 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy

[26] C(2025)5784, C(2025)7501, C(2025)815, C(2025)2888

The revised legislation provides a more modern, efficient and transparent control framework that supports sustainable fisheries, fair competition and informed consumers. The Commission will focus in the coming years on ensuring that the new system is fully and consistently implemented across the Union so that the objectives of the CFP are achieved in practice. Its efforts will be driven by the goal of ensuring simplification and alleviation of the administrative burden. Member States also have a crucially important part to play in implementation and need to make full use of the many transition periods provided by the revised framework to prepare that implementation at their level.

3.2. Data and information

In 2020-2024, the Commission continued to develop and maintain the necessary IT infrastructure to enable Member States to exchange fisheries data in the UN/FLUX format. The FLUX TL software has been brought to a level of technological maturity where it is capable of handling the volume of data exchange, which will further increase as the VMS and e-logbook reporting obligations are extended to all vessels under the revised Control Regulation.

The Commission has continued to propose implementation documents, in the form of implementing and delegated acts that contain the detailed rules for data exchanges both within the EU and with international partners. These documents are agreed with the Member States through the Electronic Reporting System and Data Management expert group.

The Commission has developed standardised formats for exchanging data on fishing authorisations and inspection reports. The LICENCE system for exchanging fishing authorisations between Member States, third parties and the Commission became operational in December 2020. Its development has continued to encompass all external fishing fleet authorisations. Currently, communication between Member States and the Commission is fully electronic for all authorisations except ICCAT (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. A fully electronic exchange between the Commission and the third party is in place for Norway, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization and NEAFC (North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission).

Recreational fishing, previously a regulatory blind spot, has now been addressed by the revised Control Regulation, closing a significant loophole in terms of catch reporting and understanding of the impact of recreational fisheries on certain stocks. The Commission, at the request of the European Parliament, launched a pilot project in November 2019 to develop and test a 'control scheme for recreational catches of sea bass'[27]. An external contractor has developed an integrated IT tool to enable recreational fishers to quickly inform national authorities of their daily catches by registering them. A web-based platform was developed to receive the catch data (RecFishing.eu), and has been further expanded, given the pilot project's success, as a basis for the end-to-end reporting solution provided for in the revised Control

[27] Control scheme for recreational catches of sea bass

Regulation[28] The results were presented in the webinar 'Monitoring and control of recreational fisheries' in December 2020[29].

3.3. Verification and monitoring activities by the Commission

Member States must ensure that they have effective fisheries control systems in place. The Commission is responsible for overseeing the application of the Control Regulation and the CFP rules by the Member States. To verify the effectiveness of their control systems and compliance with CFP rules by Member States, the Commission carries out audits, verifications and autonomous inspections.

Over the reporting period, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the Commission's ability to conduct audits and verifications. Despite these challenges, around 50 audits and verifications were conducted, including the follow-up of ongoing action plans (see below). The primary focus in this period was on the weighing of landings and catch reporting across the eight Baltic Sea Member States, as well as in France, Spain, Ireland, and the Netherlands. In several of these Member States, the audit and verifications uncovered serious shortcomings that could result in the significant misreporting of catches and hence contribute to overfishing. Working with these Member States to establish corrective actions to address the shortcomings has been a priority. A series of audits were also conducted to assess the implementation of the Western Mediterranean Multiannual Plan in Italy, Spain, and France, as well as the fulfilment of the landing obligation in Spain, France, Belgium, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

In many cases, findings from audits and verifications were successfully addressed by Member States as part of informal bilateral exchanges.

Between 2020 and 2024, the Commission opened 37 pre-infringement dialogues on fisheries control with 21 Member States, all of which have been closed. Four pre-infringement dialogues launched in 2019 were still ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

If the Commission identifies shortcomings in the Member States' control systems that require more effort and time for Member States to address, it may resort to drawing up action plans with those Member States. Between 2020 and 2024, the Commission established three new action plans bringing the total number of ongoing action plans to fifteen. Their main objectives are to address deficiencies identified in the catch-registration system, improve sanctioning systems, enhance the risk-management process and strengthen data-validation and traceability systems.

Finally, in 2020-2024, the Commission opened 10 infringement procedures against Member States pertaining to fisheries control. These procedures related to: (i) the control of farms in bluefin-tuna fisheries[30]; (ii) compliance with obligations regarding control and enforcement of

[28] This end-to-end reporting solution, which 13 Member States requested to use, went live on 9 January 2026

[29] https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/news/webinar-recreational-fisheries-monitoring-and-control-2020-12-04_en

[30] Croatia and Malta

the landing obligation[31]; (iii) compliance with EU law regarding the external fleet[32]; (iv) compliance with EU law regarding the weighing and registration of catches[33]; and (v) compliance with EU law regarding weighing, the registration of catches, transport and traceability[34]. Nine of these procedures were closed, while one was still ongoing at the end of the reporting period[35]. One infringement procedure that was launched in 2014 on compliance with certain weighing and catch reporting provisions was closed[36]. An infringement procedure concerning the points system for serious infringements was also closed[37].

4. Fisheries control and implementation of the CFP and EMFF/EMFAF

The Control Regulation is one of the main pillars of the implementation of the CFP, in particular because it lays down the rules for reporting catches. These rules are essential for verifying compliance with annually adopted catch limits. In 2024, the Commission implemented a new IT system for aggregated catch and effort reporting, developing its capacities for monitoring catch limits and reporting under international agreements. The timeliness and completeness of the Member States' reporting improved during the period, but some persistent shortcomings remain in this area. Lack of timely and accurate reporting hampers the follow-up of quota consumption and the operation of transfers and deductions.

The use of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) has been crucial in supporting the fisheries control efforts of a number of Member States, making the EMFF and EMFAF essential pillars of the EU fisheries control framework. Under the EMFF, Member States reported EUR 418 million of EMFF-eligible expenditure for control and enforcement operations in the 2014-2023 period.[38] Among the many types of investment, the top three were: (i) purchase, installation and technology development (EUR 95 million); (ii) the purchase of other control means (EUR 87 million); and (iii) operational costs (EUR 82 million). These three types of investment together constituted around 63% of total EMFF-eligible expenditure related to control and enforcement.

Under the EMFAF Member States indicated EUR 479 million in programmes for the type of intervention 'Control and enforcement' under SO1.4 (Fostering efficient fisheries control and enforcement, including fighting against IUU fishing, as well as reliable data for knowledge-based decision-making). As at the end of 2024, under the type of intervention 'Control and enforcement' Member States reported EMFAF support (committed amounts towards beneficiaries) to the amount of EUR 118 million and EMFAF-eligible expenditure of EUR 26 million. Of the EUR 118 million of EMFAF support, EUR 99.2 million, or 84%, was

31 The Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, France, Spain

32 France

33 The Netherlands

34 Belgium

35 The Netherlands

36 Denmark

37 Ireland

38 EMFF funding covered 2014 to 2020, with certain expenditures extending beyond. The EMFAF funding began in 2021. It is not possible to isolate expenditure for 2020-2024

reported under the type of operation "Control and enforcement (public)". The other types of operation were cooperation (EUR 8.7 million), inspections (EUR 3.9 million), IT - software (EUR 3.1 million), control and enforcement (private), events, governance, IT-development and maintenance, knowledge sharing and observation coordination.

5. Coordination with Member States, EFCA and non-EU partners in international forums

The effective and efficient application of the fisheries-control system requires constant interaction and collaboration among Member States, the Commission and EFCA. It also requires international cooperation with non-EU countries and regional fisheries-management organisations.

The Commission regularly discusses the implementation of the Control Regulation with Member States and EFCA in the expert group on fisheries control. Enforcement issues are discussed in the expert group on compliance, while IT developments and implementation are discussed in the ERS and data management expert group.

At EU level, the Commission and EFCA closely collaborate to ensure efficient implementation of the fisheries-control system, exchanging information and data, and participating in various fisheries control meetings. In particular, the Commission has been involved in: (i) the activities organised by the regional control expert groups and advisory councils, where relevant; (ii) the activities organised by EFCA to implement JDPs; and (iii) the EFCA working group on electronic inspection and surveillance reports.

As a global leader in ocean governance and a front-line fighter against IUU fishing, the EU is active in promoting better ocean governance, including control measures. In line with the international ocean-governance agenda[39], the Commission has worked closely with partners from around the globe, such as regional fisheries-management organisations[40] and international organisations[41]. It has also worked bilaterally and multilaterally with non-EU coastal countries in its neighbourhood, e.g. the United Kingdom, countries that have worked with the EU in fishing agreements[42] and non-EU countries taking part in IUU dialogues[43], to: (i) improve the level playing field in fisheries control; (ii) ensure fisheries compliance; (iii) apply the latest fisheries control and data exchange standards[44]; and (iv) ensure proper follow-up of non-compliance.

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39 Action 7 of the Agenda calls on 'Fighting illegal fishing and strengthening the sustainable management of ocean food resources globally': https://ec.europa.eu/oceans-and-fisheries/ocean/international-ocean-governance_en

40 Regional fisheries management organisations

41 International agreements

42 Sustainable fisheries partnership agreements

43 Illegal fishing

44 Thanks to EU efforts, NEAFC adopted the FLUX standard for data exchanges in November 2018. The Commission has also started negotiations on the introduction of the UN/FLUX standard in various bilateral forums, including with Norway and the Faroe Islands

6. Conclusion

The implementation and evaluation of the Control Regulation have underlined the vital role that fisheries control plays in achieving the objectives of the CFP. Over the recent reporting period, progress has been made on modernising the fisheries control system through a major revision of its basic regulation, which will strengthen compliance and further support sustainable fisheries. The Commission's efforts in developing IT infrastructure, conducting audits, and offering expert guidance have helped Member States implement the Control Regulation more effectively. These initiatives have led to improvements in data exchange and the enforcement of conservation measures, and have streamlined the process of quota transfers, leading to greater transparency and efficiency.

Greater use of new surveillance technologies, such as drones and sophisticated electronic reporting systems, has boosted the effectiveness of fisheries inspections and monitoring, thereby contributing to better compliance and more sustainable fisheries practices. Member States have also dedicated resources to improving reporting and inspection capabilities, with a notable rise in the number of patrol days at sea - despite the COVID-19 pandemic's occurring over the reporting period - and the operational use of surveillance aircraft.

However, several shortcomings and challenges remain that require the continued attention of Member States. Persistent issues include weaknesses in weighing and catch registration, difficulties in controlling and enforcing the landing obligation without using REM, and dependency on unreliable paper-based systems. There is also a need to address deficiencies in data validation and traceability systems and the sanctions applied for infringements, to ensure a level playing field among operators and improve enforcement provisions.

To address these challenges, Member States must work collaboratively to implement corrective actions that strengthen fisheries-control systems. The Commission's action plans, alongside ongoing audits and verifications, provide a framework for these improvements. Ensuring compliance with EU law regarding weighing, the registration of catches, transport, and traceability are essential for the long-term sustainability of fisheries.

Looking ahead, the implementation of the revised fisheries control legislation will be integral to the EU's rising to these challenges, including through the increased use of digital tools to simplify Member States' and operators' activities and alleviate the related administrative burden. Strengthening enforcement provisions, ensuring the quality and sharing of fisheries data, and achieving synergies with other policies are all crucial. The future installation of REM will also enable the competent authorities to identify illegal discards and tackle cases of non-compliance. Through these measures, the EU aims to continue to play a leading role in global ocean governance while promoting the ecological transformation necessary for the future of sustainable fisheries.

The revised Control Regulation has opened a new chapter in fisheries control at EU level. It ensures that all fishers, in all sea basins, play by the same rules. It protects honest operators and strengthens cooperation and trust between Member States. It mainstreams technology to alleviate the administrative burden for Member States and operators. The years ahead will be critical for its implementation, in terms of the secondary legislation to be adopted by the Commission, implementation by Member States and enforcement across sea basins and fisheries. The continued political commitment and technical engagement of Member States will be necessary in that respect. These efforts will be critical for the success of the revision of

the Control Regulation and for ensuring that the level of ambition set by the co-legislators, especially in terms of strengthening fisheries control and simplification through the use of digital tools, will be delivered. The Commission is committed to continuing to work transparently and collaboratively with Member States on the implementation of the Control Regulation.