



Committee on Fisheries
The Chair

DRAFT 06.12.2024

Mr. Bernd LANGE
Chair
Committee on International Trade
BRUSSELS

Subject: Opinion by the Committee on Fisheries (PECH) to the Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Kingdom of Norway and the Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and Iceland (2024/0052(NLE))

Dear Chair,

Further to the PECH Coordinators' decision of 16 September 2024, the Committee on Fisheries adopted, on XX January 2025¹, the following opinion in the form of a letter, for the procedure 2024/0052(NLE), with particular regard to the two protocols with Norway and Iceland, to the extent that they cover fisheries-related matters.

Yours sincerely,

Carmen Crespo Díaz
c/c: Legislative Coordination

¹ The following were present for the final vote: [] ([Chair / acting Chair]), ... (Vice-Chair), ... (Vice-Chair), ... (rapporteur for opinion), ... (for ...), ... (Member under Rule 216(7)), ... and) ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾

OPINION

Of the Committee on Fisheries to the Committee on International Trade

Concerning the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement between the European Union, Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Kingdom of Norway on an EEA Financial Mechanism for the period May 2021-April 2028, the Agreement between the kingdom of Norway and the European Union on Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period May 2021-April 2028, the Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Kingdom of Norway and the Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and Iceland - 2024/0052(NLE)

Adopted on XX January 2025

A. Whereas the Commission submitted on 4 March 2024 a proposal (COM(2024) 97 final) for a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement between the European Union, Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Kingdom of Norway on an EEA Financial Mechanism for the period May 2021–April 2028, the Agreement between the Kingdom of Norway and the European Union on a Norwegian Financial Mechanism for the period May 2021–April 2028, the Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Kingdom of Norway and the Additional Protocol to the Agreement between the European Economic Community and Iceland.

B. Whereas the Council decided on 25 June 2024 to request the European Parliament to give its consent to a reviewed draft Council Decision on the conclusion of the above-mentioned Agreements and Additional protocols (Council doc. 10005/24). Whereas these four international arrangements were signed by the Council on 5 September 2024, in view of their implementation on a provisional basis.

The Committee on Fisheries:

1. Recalls that agreements with third countries regarding fisheries should be built on the sustainable and responsible exploitation of marine aquatic resources and based on the best available scientific advice.
2. Recalls the importance for EU fishing fleets to exert their rights to exploit sustainably, with predictability and stability, fish stocks in the North East Atlantic, in line with international law and multilateral or bilateral fisheries agreements, in particular with Norway.
3. Highlights that the EU relation with Norway concerning fisheries has severely deteriorated since the Brexit, and expresses its deepest concerns regarding the increasing non-cooperative attitude of Norway vis-à-vis the EU concerning management of fisheries and fleets exploiting such resources.
4. Recalls in this regard the decisions by Norway to reduce EU quotas for cod and to restrict access to waters in the Svalbard archipelago for EU vessels, in breach of the Treaty of Paris on

Spitsbergen; Also recalls that, since 2021, Norway has set unilateral quotas for mackerel, well in excess of any previously agreed shares on catches and at the expenses of the EU fleets and operators, leading to overexploitation; Further recalls the non-cooperative stance of Norway in Northeast Atlantic fisheries management fora to review long-standing sharing arrangements and against important EU fisheries interests on other shared stocks, such as herring or redfish.

5. Highlights that the Norway's CO2 tax system, which applies to fishing vessels operating within a 250 nm limit from baseline (hence for part in international waters), is entirely discriminatory against EU fleets, as Norwegian vessels receive some form of compensation for it; However, acknowledges that Norway's exemption for fishing in distant waters will be gradually phased out from 2025 to 2028.

6. Regrets and raises strong concerns about the fact that Norway is still allowing access for Russian fishing vessels to four of its ports.

7. Underlines the primary importance of the EU market for Norwegian fisheries and aquaculture products; considers that access to the European seafood market should only be granted under conditions that Norway commit to ensuring level playing field between EU and Norwegian fishers and that the EU interests are protected, notably those of fishers and fish farmers and operators in the seafood value chain.

8. Regrets therefore that the Commission reached an unbalanced agreement on the renewal of the protocol granting tariff concessions to fishery products imported from Norway, negotiated in lack of transparency and without proper consultation; considers that this protocol should have been placed in the wider context of EU relations with Norway and represents a missed opportunity to use EU leverage in other areas to incentivise this country to greater cooperation with the EU on fisheries matters.

9. Strongly encourages the Commission to engage in a fully transparent and holistic approach to EU-Norway relations, by linking preferential access to the EU market to the protection of EU legitimate and historical EU fishing interests, as well as sustainability concerns; In this regard, welcomes the fact that the Commission has initiated an EU-Norway High Level Dialogue on Fisheries and stresses the high importance of this dialogue leading to concrete outcomes for EU fishing operators.

10. Strongly welcomes the Commission's proposal for a Regulation Amending Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012 on certain measures for the purpose of the conservation of fish stocks in relation to countries allowing non-sustainable fishing (2024/224(COD)), aiming at reinforcing the EU tools designed to address unsustainable fishing practices by non-EU countries and situations where non-EU countries fail to cooperate in fisheries management on fish stocks of common interest.

11. Regrets that the protocols on trade in fisheries products, between the EU and Norway and Iceland, respectively, are already applied provisionally, without waiting for the European Parliament's consent.

12. Recognises the values and reciprocal benefits of the EEA agreement allowing for cooperation and good neighbouring relations and ensuring predictability to operators of both sides, as well as the highly significant contribution provided by the Agreements on Financial

Mechanism between the European Union and EEA countries to the alleviation of economic and social disparities in the EEA.

13. Deplores however that the Commission did not provide any objective justifications as to the links between the four agreements and protocols when proposing them to be concluded by the Council within a single decision (COM (2024) 97 final); Highlights that the Commission indicates on the opposite that the reviews of the EU-Iceland and EU-Norway fish trade protocol were done in parallel, but independently of the negotiations on the financial mechanisms.

14. Calls the attention for the fact that, while the legal basis proposed by the Commission for the conclusion of these four different agreements and protocols were different, the Council decided to present them to Parliament for consent as one single package under a same legal basis.

[OPTION 1 - rejection of the protocol with NO]

15. In view of the above, **marks its disapproval of the conclusion of the fisheries-related Protocol between the European Economic Community and Norway**; consequently also invites the Committee on International Trade to reject the conclusion of this protocol with Norway and, by extension, of the other protocol and agreements to which it is has been related in a non-dissociable manner within a single “package” decision.

[OPTION 2 - approval]

15. Urges the Commission to follow the implementation of both protocols closely and in the interest of all parties. In case of non-compliance or, if dialogue of good faith and cooperation with Norway regarding fisheries matters continues to fail, calls on the Commission to use the response measures provided for in Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012, which may include restrictions to imports of fishery products or to access to EU ports.

16. Reiterates its strong concerns regarding the limits and imbalances of the fisheries-related Protocol between the European Economic Community and Norway, nonetheless **invites the Committee on International Trade to recommend approval** of the four international arrangements **as one package**.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The Chair declares under her exclusive responsibility that she did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.