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## **EU anglers and industry made the case at the European Parliament that a full and fair recognition of the Recreational Fisheries Sector in the Common Fisheries Policy is overdue**

*Once again, the huge socio-economic value of Marine Recreational Fisheries in Europe - more than 10 billion euros, supporting 100,000 jobs - and the case that this sector needs to be fully and fairly included in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) was at the heart of a debate held in the European Parliament. The event was arranged by MEP Norica Nicolai, rapporteur of the pending EP report '[The state of play of recreational fisheries in the EU](#)'. A first draft was presented to the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries in November 2017. It is expected to be voted by the Committee in March, to be finally adopted at a following Parliamentary plenary session.*

The conference “**State of play of recreational fisheries in the EU - The anglers’ point of view & the importance of recognition of recreational fisheries at the EU level**” held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, was co-chaired by the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) **Norica Nicolai, Werner Kuhn and Ole Christensen**. The event facilitated an exchange of views between EU policy-makers and the recreational fisheries sector represented by the European Anglers Alliance ([EAA](#)) and the European Fishing Tackle Trade Association ([EFTTA](#)).

The conference was opened by **MEP Alain Cadec**, who stressed the big importance of the recreational sector in terms of business and jobs for coastal areas and beyond. He also urged for a clear definition of recreational fisheries to support inclusion of the sector in EU legislation in the most appropriate way.

His words were echoed by the representatives of the recreational fisheries sector **David Vertegaal** from *Sportvisserij Nederland*, the Dutch member of the EAA, and **Jean-Claude Bel**, CEO of the EFTTA, who underlined the fact that there are 8.7 million people fishing at sea recreationally and that the sector generates 100.000 jobs (FTE) and 10.5 billion EUR/year in Europe.

The lack of timely and comprehensive data on recreational fisheries remains a major issue for the sector’s economic actors. Robust data helps businesses to improve their market forecasts, production and marketing planning. For the legislators, lack of data translates to legislation that is adopted based on poor or even wrong information, which is a major concern for the industry and anglers. The very sudden ban, that anglers cannot keep any Northern sea bass is an example on this.

The spending on recreational fisheries data collection is too little for various reasons. One reason is the legislation, which only requires data collected if or when a species is in trouble. This is too late. It leads to drastic and disproportional management measures as the bass example shows. Multi-species survey should be conducted routinely, to be able to catch



signals of stock depletion and to react at a much earlier stage before emergency measures are needed.

The representatives of the recreational fisheries sector urged the EU policy-makers to include recreational fisheries into the CFP as a separate sector and on an equal footing with the commercial fisheries and aquaculture. The inclusion of recreational fisheries in the CFP would be beneficial to people, economy and fish stocks as it would contribute positively to the sustainable management and exploitation of the fish stocks. It was also stressed that, to achieve a positive outcome, all fisheries sectors need to work together and that the CFP would provide the right framework.

*“A CFP without recreational fisheries is like having a Member State in the EU with no voting rights”* said David Vertegaal.

The need for a clear definition of recreational fisheries was reiterated by several speakers including **MEP Ole Christensen**, who reminded that the EU legislation regulates only two fisheries sectors, commercial and recreational fisheries. Semi-subsistence fisheries can have a great impact on the stocks and should be identified but not treated as a separate entity. In this regard, it is important that sold catches are counted as commercial catches as it is illegal for recreational fishers to sell their catches.

The European Commission, represented by **Evangelia Georgitsi** from DG MARE, thanked MEP Norica Nicolai for bringing attention to this important issue and underlined that her report gives an accurate and useful diagnosis of the state of recreational fisheries in the EU while pointing out some of the most pressing challenges faced by the sector. She highlighted that, although the CFP mentions recreational fisheries only once, this sector is gaining more and more importance and attention from the policy-makers.

The presentations were followed by a lively debate, moderated by **MEP Werner Kuhn**.

Scientist **Kieran Hyder** of Cefas, and chair of the Working Group on Recreational Fisheries Surveys (ICES) took the floor to say he was happy to see the [study](#), which he and colleagues delivered to the Parliament last year, being used. Mr Hyder made an important point about the present list of species for data collection. He finds it sensible to run multi-species surveys as “*until you start to know what you need, it is too late to start data collection*”. Pilots are a good thing “*but they need to be multi-species pilots*”, he said.

**MEP Norica Nicolai**, concluded the event by stating that the CFP reflects an old vision of the economy and that the recreational sector could become one of the most important sustainable industries in the future. This is why it deserves priority from the EU institutions.

A video recording of the conference is available [here](#).

More information about the event, including the speaker’s presentations are available [here](#).

**Pictures below:**



*From left to right: David Vertegaal (EAA), Evangelia Georgitsi (EC), MEP Ole Christensen, MEP Werner Kuhn, MEP Norica Nicolai, MEP Alain Cadec, Jean-Claude Bel (EFTTA) and Fred Bloot (EAA).*



*From left to right: David Vertegaal (EAA), Evangelia Georgitsi (EC), MEP Ole Christensen, MEP Werner Kuhn, MEP Norica Nicolai, MEP Alain Cadec and Jean-Claude Bel (EFTTA).*

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