

BirdLife Europe calls on MEPs to design a sustainable Fisheries Policy reform

Title

From 6 to 8 November, Birdlife Europe raised the awareness of Members of the European Parliament (MEP) on overfishing in Europe through an exhibition stand in the European Parliament. The exhibition was organised together with Greenpeace, Oceana, WWF and Ocean2012 and aimed at encouraging MEPs to vote for sustainable fisheries on 18 December. Many MEPs representing the fisheries committee, and other key decision makers involved in the issue, visited the stand to learn more about the problem of overfishing in Europe.

Videos, educative animations and interviews with European fishermen were played on video explaining the consequences of overfishing. The main threats include overall food security, depletion of our marine ecosystems and the services they provide that benefit society as a whole. These threats refer particularly to fishermen that will lose their jobs if there is no more fish to catch. [Photos displays of fishermen at the exhibition](#) demonstrated a striking fact; in 1925 the average size of a cod was more than 1m. Today the average size is about 40cm.

This is the result of years of unsustainable fishery practices, consisting of catching as much large size cod as possible. As only small cods were left in the oceans, the next generations became smaller and smaller in size and in population. Moreover, the current EU legislation allows fishermen to fish 35cm large cods in EU waters, below the average size at which the species reproduce. [The Marine Conservation Society explains that the size at which 50% of females first spawn is approximately 60 to 70 cm.](#) 88% of fish stocks are harvested beyond their ecological capacity, like the cod, whereas less fishing pressure today would allow stocks to recover, delivering greater sizes in the future. However, it is likely that the European Parliament and Council are going to delete measures ensuring sustainability in fisheries from the Commission's proposal.

On the contrary, both institutions declare intentions of increasing fishing capacity. The risk is, other than favoring the large-scale fisheries industry to the detriment of small fishermen, a deep decrease in fish stocks resulting in the collapse of the fisheries sector and a high level of unemployment for fishermen. Birdlife Europe is engaged in the on-going EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform and is now urging the MEPs and the Council, that are currently working on the Commission's proposal, to come up with a real fisheries policy reform next

year, ensuring sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems in the future both in European and International waters. Only this will guarantee our food security and the viability of the fisheries sector in the long term. For more information please contact [Johanna Karhu](#), Marine and Fisheries Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe
