

EU-Morocco fisheries agreement

During the February part-session, the Parliament is due to vote on giving its consent to the conclusion of a new fisheries agreement and implementing protocol with Morocco, which also cover Western Saharan waters.

Background

The EU initiated its fisheries cooperation with Morocco in the wake of Spain's accession, to maintain the long-standing presence of Spanish boats in the area, and concluded a series of agreements in [1988](#), [1992](#) and [1995](#). Cooperation, interrupted in 1999 due to Morocco's concerns over the state of its stocks, resumed with the [2006](#) agreement and protocol. In 2011, the European Parliament [rejected](#) an extension of the protocol, citing economic, ecological and legal reasons. A [protocol](#) was subsequently adopted for 2014-2018. With a large part of the [EU catches](#) under the agreement originating in Western Saharan waters (see map), the Western Sahara issue has plagued fisheries cooperation. Morocco considers Western Sahara part of its territory, a claim not recognised by the United Nations or the EU. Requested to decide on the validity of the latest agreement and protocol (Case [C-266/16](#)), the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) ruled, on 27 February 2018, that they are valid since they are not applicable to the waters adjacent to the territory of Western Sahara.

European Commission proposal

On 8 October 2018, the Commission [proposed](#) a new agreement and 4-year protocol including Western Saharan waters, taking the view that they do not contradict the CJEU judgment if they explicitly apply to these waters, and the populations concerned gave their consent. The consultation process involved a variety of stakeholders, however the Polisario Front – the [UN-recognised](#) representative of the Sahrawi people – did not participate, contesting Morocco's authority to negotiate an agreement on Western Saharan waters. The protocol would provide [fishing opportunities](#) for 128 EU vessels, with licences for demersal species allocated to Spain and Portugal, and tuna licences to Spain and France. The Netherlands, Lithuania and Latvia cover more than 70 % of the allocated quotas for large-scale small pelagics fishing, with the remainder shared between Germany, the United Kingdom, Poland, Ireland, Portugal, France and Spain. The average annual EU contribution is set at €40.15 million (increased from €30 million in the previous protocol), of which €19.4 million represent the average sectoral support. The ship-owners' fees are estimated at €12 million per year on average.

European Parliament position

On 23 January 2019, the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries (PECH) [recommended](#) that Parliament give its consent to the conclusion of the agreement. However, the PECH committee rejected the accompanying [motion](#), as requested by the rapporteur following the adoption of several amendments largely related to concerns over the Western Sahara issue.

Moroccan and Western Saharan waters



Data source: [MarineRegions.org](#), consulted on 28 January 2019. Other coastal states' exclusive economic zones are in blue-green.

Consent: [2018/0349\(NLE\)](#); Committee responsible: PECH;
Rapporteur: Alain Cadec (EPP, France).

