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Report on the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities in Finland in 2016

Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Article 22

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Natural Resources Department
Finland

Foreword

This report uses data from 2016 and 2017 to assess the annual capacity of the national fleet and fleet segments and identify any possible structural overcapacity of the fleet and determine the fleet's long-term profitability. The report has been drawn up in accordance with Commission guidelines COM(2014) 545, 2.9.2014.

1. The Finnish fishing fleet and fisheries

Table 1.1 shows the development of the fishing fleet from its establishment on 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2016. Finland's fishing capacity has decreased in terms of all size indicators of the fleet: number of vessels (units) -24.7%, tonnage (GT) -34.2% and propulsion power (kW) -24.8%. Since 1 January 2014 the reduction has been -3.7% for the number of vessels (units), -2.0 for tonnage (GT) and -2.0 for propulsion power (kW).

Situation on 1 January 1995 - initial level		
GT	kW	No
24 619.71	224 875.54	4 107

Situation on 1 January 1997			Change compared to the previous situation					
GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No
23 480.33	218 244.42	4 019	-1 139.38	-4.6%	-6 631.12	-2.9%	-88	-2.1%

Situation on 1 January 2003			Change compared to the previous situation						Change compared to the initial level					
GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No
19 863.18	190 161.30	3 573	-3 617.15	-15.4%	-28 083.12	-12.9%	-446	-11.1%	-4 756.53	-19.3%	-34 714.24	-15.4%	-534	-13.0%

Situation on 31 December 2013			Change compared to the previous situation						Change compared to the initial level					
GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No
16 524.48	172 607.00	3 211	-3 338.70	-16.8%	-17 554.30	-9.2%	-362	-10.1%	-8 095.23	-32.9%	-52 268.54	-23.2%	-896	-21.8%

Situation on 31 December 2016			Change compared to the previous situation						Change compared to the initial level					
GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No	GT	kW	No
16 188.42	169 216.80	3 093	-336.06	-2.0%	-3 390.20	-2.0 %	-118	-3.7%	-8 431.29	-34.2%	-55 658.74	-24.8%	-1 014	-24.7%

Table 1.1. Development of the Finnish fishing fleet between 1 January 1995 (Finland's accession to the EU) and 31 December 2016 (as calculated most recently on 6 June 2017).

Table 1.2 below summarises the development since 1 January 2003 in both categories of vessels used today.

A new fleet management system was introduced in Finland in 2011 under the Act on the registration of sea-going vessels engaged in fishing and aquaculture (690/2010). The fleet is divided into offshore vessels and coastal vessels. The aim is also to ease ship registration processes and clarify responsibilities. The Act entered into force on 1 January 2011.

During 2016 the overall capacity of the fleet increased in terms of tonnage (769 GT; 5.0%) and propulsion power (12 347 kW; 7.9%). In the offshore vessels category, there were reductions in tonnage (-77 GT; -0.9%) and propulsion power (-476 kW; 1.5%).

The decrease in capacity was significant compared to the corrected initial level of 1 January 2003: 18% (GT) and 11% (kW) for the whole fleet. The reduction was the starkest in the coastal vessels category, where the number of vessels fell by 73%, tonnage by 29% and propulsion power by 48%. The main cause for this was the drift net fishing ban that came into force on 1 January 2008.

Under Article 22(7) (Annex II) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, Finland's fishing capacity ceiling may not exceed 18 066 GT and 181 717 kW after 1 January 2014. These are imputed ceilings that take into account the supported decommissioning of fishing vessels. The capacity of Finland's fleet remained clearly below this ceiling between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2016.

	EU1380/2013, Article 22	Situation on 31 December 2016	Difference with the fishing capacity ceiling

	GT	kW	GT	kW	GT	%	kW	%
Total	18 066	181 717	16 188	169 217	-3 674	-18%	-20 945	-11%

Table 1.2 Fishing capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet on 31 December 2016 compared to the ceiling defined in Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 (as calculated most recently on 6 June 2017).

As calculated most recently, the Finnish fishing fleet on 31 December 2016 was -3 674 GT (-18%) and -20 945 kW (-11%) below the fishing capacity ceiling authorised under the Regulation.

	Situation on 1 January 2003			Situation on 31 December 2016			Change compared to the initial level					
	GT	kW	number	GT	kW	number	GT	%	kW	%	number	%
1. Offshore vessels	11 640	59 813	230	8 216	30 812	61	-3 424	-29%	-29 001	-48%	-169	-73%
2. Coastal vessels	8 223	130 349	3 343	7 972	138 405	3 032	-251	-3%	8 056	6%	-311	-9%
Total	19 863	190 162	3 573	16 188	169 217	3 093	-3 674	-18%	-20 945	-11%	-480	-13%

Table 1.3. Changes in the Finnish fishing fleet, by vessel category, between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2016 (as calculated most recently on 6 June 2017).

A significant number of coastal vessels are used to fish mainly non-quota species: coastal fish stocks, such as whitefish (*Coregonus lavaretus*), pike-perch (*Stizostedion lucioperca*), pike (*Esox lucius*) and perch (*Perca fluviatilis*). Coastal fishing of quota species targets herring (*Clupea harengus membras*) and salmon (*Salmo salar*). Offshore vessels are principally used to fish herring and sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*). Some offshore vessels also fish cod (*Gadus morhua*) and salmon (*Salmo salar*).

2. Fishing capacity

Table 2.1 presents the quota percentage take-ups for 2016. The rate was the highest in sprat fishing (SPR 3BCD-C), where 100% of the quota was utilised. The take-up percentage of herring quotas (HER 3D-R30 and HER 30/31) and salmon quotas (SAL 3BCD-F) was also high. On the other hand, the size of Finland's fishing fleet has decreased substantially in the MAGP IV period after 1 January 2003, and this is reflected in the utilisation of quotas.

It was not necessary to restrict the utilisation of herring and sprat quotas in 2016. The sprat stock has developed positively in the Baltic Sea in recent years. Its stock is within safe biological limits, and therefore it was possible to deduct the by-catch under Article 15(8) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 from the quotas of the target species, i.e. herring, in the second half of the year.

Nationality	Species Area	Total	Landings	Landings	Catch/quota	
		quota	in Finland	elsewhere	Total	(%)
FIN	HER 3BC+24	2 200	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00 %
FIN	HER 30/31.	131 578 750	71 715 723	37 952 145	109 667 868	83.35%
FIN	HER 3D-R30	40 904 402	23 389 312	8 399 549	31 788 861	77.72%
FIN	COD 3DX32.	826 240	57 059	17 907	74 966	9.07%
FIN	COD 3BC+24	122 600	0 00	11 248	11 248	9.17%
FIN	PLE 3BCD-C	3 000	0 0	0 0	0 0	0.00 %
FIN	SAL 3BCD-F	28 188	24 653	0	24 653	87.46%
FIN	SAL 3D32.	11 762	6 288	0	6 288	50.15%
FIN	SPR 3BCD-C	11 345 088	5 232 854	6 112 234	11 345 088	100.00%

Table 2.1: Quotas, catches and landings in Finland (tonnes, individual salmon) in 2016

The take-up percentage for the sprat quota (100.0%) reflects the high market demand for this species and, above all, its prevalence in Finnish waters. The table above takes into account the flexibility mechanism provided for in Article 15(8) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.

As regards salmon fishing, in 1996 Finland introduced a decree that restricts fishing in order to protect wild salmon stocks from excessive fishing. Fishing is regulated in Finland's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone in the Gulf of Bothnia.

The small take-up percentage of cod quotas can be attributed mainly to the small fleet, weakened stocks and lower prices on the market.

Under Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 on the Common Fisheries Policy, which was still in force in 2013, the first capacity reduction of the fishing fleet was in 2004. This reduction was to remove the excess capacity identified in the pelagic fleet and the driftnetter category.

Another capacity reduction took place in the fishing fleet in 2009. The decision was made to remove excess capacity that had accumulated in the driftnetter category as a result of the ban on drift netting.

From 2004 to 2009 public support was used to permanently remove a total of 1 675 GT and 7 815 kW of fleet capacity from the Finnish fishing fleet. Table 2.2 shows the number of vessels removed as well as the dates.

Removing fishing capacity using public aid (GT/kW)						
Code	Vessel category	2004	2005	2006	2009	Total
4L2	Pelagic trawlers	83 GT / 279 kW	974 GT / 4 451 kW	247 GT / 699 kW	-	1 304 GT / 5 429 kW
4L4	Vessels using passive gear	60 GT / 294 kW	49 GT / 304 kW	17 GT / 90 kW	245 GT / 1 698 kW	371 GT / 2 386 kW
	Total	143 GT / 573 kW	1 023 GT / 4 755 kW	264 GT / 789 kW	245 GT / 1 698 kW	1 675 GT / 7 815 kW

Table 2.2 Permanent reduction of the capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet in 2003-2016 using public support

Table 2.3 presents the number of active offshore vessels at least 12 metres long in three vessel categories in 2003-2010 and in one vessel category in 2011-2016. The trend in the pelagic vessels category has been towards fewer but larger vessels. The number of vessels was halved during the period under review. The decrease in the number of vessels using passive gear results from the ban on drift netting. Since 2011, all vessels at least 12 metres long have been grouped into one vessel category (offshore vessels).

Number of active vessels	Year													
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
4L2, pelagic trawlers	107	95	80	58	55	51	53	52						
4L3, bottom trawlers	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1						
4L4, vessels using passive gear	23	22	20	16	18	14	9	7						
Total (offshore vessels as from 1 January 2011)	132	119	101	75	74	66	63	60	54	53	57	59	57	52

Table 2.3 Number of active vessels in 2003-2016 in the Finnish fishing fleet, vessel categories 4L2-4L4 and offshore vessels as from 1 January 2011.

3. Entry/exit scheme and fishing capacity ceilings

3.1. Entry/exit scheme

Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002, later replaced by Regulation (EC) No 865/2007, was in force in 2013. This Regulation requires Member States to manage entries into and exits from the fleet in such a way that the entry of new capacity into the fleet without public support is compensated by the previous withdrawal without public support of at least the same amount of capacity.

Notwithstanding the above, the tonnage of fishing vessels may be increased under Article 11(5) of Regulation (EC) No 865/2007 for the purpose of modernisation.

In 2009 the Finnish authorities allowed the tonnage of two (2) vessels of the fishing fleet to be increased by a total of 35 GT under the above-mentioned scheme. In 2011 the other vessel was removed from the register, thereby reducing the increase in tonnage to 23 GTs.

3.2. Fishing capacity ceilings

The following reference levels for the Finnish fishing fleet as from 1 January 2003 have been ratified in Annex 1 to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1013/2010. That text was still in force in 2013.

$$R(\text{GT})_{03} = 23\,203 \text{ GT}$$

$$R(\text{kW})_{03} = 216\,195 \text{ kW}$$

Finland had met all the requirements of the fourth Multiannual Guidance Programme IV (MAGP IV) by 31 December 2013.

As a result of the entry/exit scheme provided for in Article 13 of Council Regulation (EC) No 865/2007, the actual maximum authorised target levels of the fleet were smaller. New target levels for 2013 were calculated on the basis of the Regulation. The new fishing capacity ceilings for Finland are set out in Article 22(7) of and Annex II to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013. As from 1 January 2014, they are:

$$R(\text{GT})_{14} = 18\,066 \text{ GT}$$

$$R(\text{kW})_{14} = 181\,717 \text{ kW}$$

In 2016 no events were recorded in the fishing vessel register that would have affected these ceilings. The re-measuring of certain vessels of the fleet and the corrections (COR) made to some of the registered data have also affected the actual target levels (capacity ceiling).

As calculated most recently, the Finnish fishing fleet on 31 December 2016 was -3 674 GT (-18%) and -20 945 kW (-11%) below the fishing capacity ceiling authorised under the Regulation.

Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 show that Finland complied with all the target levels set and the rules of the entry/exit scheme in 2016 as well as in the previous years of the 2003-2015 monitoring period.

4. Observations on the fishing fleet

The development of the fishing fleet and its impact on fishing opportunities have been analysed above. This paragraph contains more details as well as background information.

The fleet is divided into two operational units (vessel categories). This division came into force on 1 January 2011. Vessel category 1 includes offshore vessels: pelagic trawlers, bottom trawlers and vessels using passive gear. Vessel category 2 includes coastal vessels. The predecessors of these vessel categories were determined in the fourth Multiannual Guidance Programme (MAGP IV). The vessel category rules and restrictions were mandatory until 31 December 2012. However, back then vessels were not able to adapt flexibly to new market conditions and quota quantities that fluctuated yearly. Those restrictive provisions ceased to apply on 1 January 2013, after which the management of fleet segments became the Member States' duty.

The new vessel categories established at national level do not restrict either the right to use certain types of fishing gear or target species. This means that if the vessel owner so wishes, he may change the type of fishing engaged in. The vessel owner only needs to inform the authorities of changes to the registered data. This makes it possible for the authorities to regularly supervise and manage the situation.

At the end of 2016, there were 61 vessels in the offshore vessels category. As stated in the definition, all the vessels in this category are at least 12 metres long in total; the perpendicular length of the

largest vessel is 41.09 metres. The overall capacity of the vessel category accounted for 50.8% (GT) and 18.2% (kW) of the entire fleet.

As stated in the definition, the vessels in the coastal vessels category are under 12 metres long in total. Most of Finland's fishing vessels (3 093 vessels) belong to this category. The overall capacity of the vessels is 49.2% (GT) and 81.8% (kW) of the entire fleet.

The registered capacity ceiling of both vessel groups has been limited separately by a decision of the Finnish Government.

Generally speaking, the capacity and fishing effort of the Finnish fishing fleet can be considered acceptable in relation to the available fishing opportunities.

National limits were applied to herring and sprat catches also in 2016, as in previous years. The purpose of these limits is to make sure that the sprat quota, which is much smaller than Finland's herring quota, does not hinder the fishing of herring. Sprat is found mainly in the Gulf of Finland and the main basin of the Baltic Sea, where it is caught together with herring. In 2016 sprat was found in exceptionally large numbers also in the Sea of Åland and the Bothnian Sea. Therefore fishing had to be limited also in these maritime areas in order to avoid catching sprat.

Finland's sprat quota SPR 3BCD-C for 2016 was fulfilled on 24 May 2016, after which sprat by-catches were reported as part of the herring quota in accordance with Article 15(8) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013:

'8. By way of derogation from the obligation to count catches against the relevant quotas in accordance with paragraph 1, catches of species that are subject to the landing obligation and that are caught in excess of quotas of the stocks in question, or catches of species in respect of which the Member State has no quota, may be deducted from the quota of the target species provided that they do not exceed 9 % of the quota of the target species. This provision shall only apply where the stock of the non-target species is within safe biological limits.'

In this way it was possible to use the herring quotas to the fullest extent possible. The system worked well and enabled optimal utilisation of the herring and sprat quotas.

Finland's cod fleet is rather small, so annual fluctuations in fishing effort and catches can be expected. Unlike in previous years, it was not necessary to limit cod fishing in 2016, because the small size and low price of cod did not encourage fishermen to exploit Finland's cod quotas. Most of the fishing vessels that had previously caught cod switched to exploiting fishing opportunities for herring and sprat.

At the beginning of 2017, Finland introduced a system of transferable fishing concessions (TFC) and operator-specific fishing quotas for herring, sprat and salmon. This has made it easier to manage the quotas, because, for example, it is no longer necessary to regulate herring and sprat fishing. Fishing undertakings decide themselves when and in which area they fish under their quota. The new quota system will likely reduce fishing capacity in Finland, as has happened in other countries after the introduction of a similar system.

In point 5 below, we examine the balance between the fleet and resources using indicators set out in the Commission's guidelines.

5. Analysis of the balance between the fishing fleet and the fishery resources it exploits, using biological, financial and technical parameters

5.1. Biological indicators

Biological indicators are used to assess whether the fleet's operations are based on over-exploited stocks or whether they may pose a serious biological risk to endangered fish stocks.

The Finnish fishing fleet uses the following fishing quotas in the Baltic Sea:

- Bothnian Bay herring (subdivisions 30-31)
- Herring in the main basin of the Baltic sea and in the Gulf of Finland (subdivisions 25–27, 28.2, 29 and 32)
- Sprat (subdivisions 22-32)

- Eastern cod (subdivisions 25-32)
- Western cod (subdivisions 22-24)
- Salmon in the main basin of the Baltic sea and in the Gulf of Bothnia (subdivisions 22-31)
- Gulf of Finland salmon (subdivision 32)

These quotas have been ratified by the European Council, on the basis, among others, of the scientific advice given by ICES and STECF.

In accordance with the scientific recommendations issued by ICES on 31 May 2017, the status of these fish stocks is the following:

The spawning-stock biomass (SSB) of the herring stock in the Gulf of Bothnia (ICES subdivision 30 and 31) is at target level (SSB 2016 is clearly above the MSY Btrigger), while the fishing mortality is slightly higher than the target level (Fmsy 0.21, in 2016 F was 0.23). ICES recommends reducing the TAC for Gulf of Bothnia herring. The Gulf of Bothnia herring quota (ICES subdivisions 30-31) is economically the most important quota for the Finnish fleet. The Bothnian Bay herring quota consists mostly of herring stock from the Bothnian Sea, which, according to ICES, was at target level (Fmsy 0.15, as previously set for the herring stock in subdivision 30 of the Bothnian Sea) almost without interruption between 1973 and 2011. Fishing mortality in 2012-2014 exceeded slightly the Fmsy level.

According to ICES's latest scientific advice, the herring stock in the main basin of the Baltic sea and in the Gulf of Finland (subdivisions 25–27, 28.2, 29 and 32) is at the targeted Fmsy level (Fmsy 0.22., in 2016 F was 0.20) and the spawning-stock biomass (SSB) in 2016 was clearly above the MSY Btrigger.

According to ICES's latest scientific advice, the SSB for the sprat stock (subdivisions 22-32) in 2016 exceeded clearly the Btrigger value, and the fishing mortality was below the Fmsy (Fmsy 0.26, in 2016 F was 0.223).

As regards eastern cod (subdivisions 32-25), ICES has stated that its status cannot be analysed reliably owing to changes in the stock. The index showing the size of the stock indicates that the stock has continued to weaken. According to ICES, the western cod stock (subdivisions 22-24) is over-exploited both in terms of fishing mortality and SSB. Finland's shares of the cod quotas are small, and cod quotas do not form a significant part of the Finnish fishing fleet's fishing opportunities. In 2016, only about 10 per cent of Finland's cod quotas were taken up (including both eastern and western cod). Cod is found mainly in the southern Baltic Sea, so only marginal amounts of cod are caught in Finnish territorial waters and within Finland's exclusive economic zone.

There are a number of salmon stocks in the Baltic Sea. ICES has analysed the status of 29 wild salmon stocks on the basis of their parr production capacity (MSY = 75% of the capacity). There are two wild salmon stocks in Finland, the Simojoki and the Tornionjoki stocks. The Tornionjoki salmon stock is the biggest salmon stock in the Baltic Sea, and it has developed well. On the basis of its model, ICES estimates that Tornionjoki salmon reached, with less than 70-90% probability, 75% of their parr production capacity in 2016. The probability for Finland's other wild salmon stock, the Simojoki stock, was 30-70%. Both wild salmon stocks have developed positively since 2000.

In the Gulf of Bothnia and the Archipelago Sea, salmon fishing targets the strong salmon stocks of the Bothnian Bay and stocked salmon intended for fishing. Coastal fishing in the Gulf of Finland mainly targets stocked salmon. However, salmon catches in Finland's coastal areas also include individual fish from weak salmon stocks. Salmon fishing in Finland is carried out as coastal fishing, where the fishing capacity is based on the gear used, not on the tonnage or propulsion power of the fishing vessels. Salmon fishing in the Gulf of Bothnia is restricted to certain periods and catch amounts are limited. The locations of the fishing nets used to catch salmon are managed partly by the fishing authorities, which also limits the fishing effort. In addition, private fishing rights in coastal waters limit commercial salmon fishing.

Important non-quota fish stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet include perch, pike-perch, whitefish and pike. ICES has not provided analysed data for these fish stocks. However, the Natural Resources Institute's research report 57/2017 on the status of fish stocks in 2016 and forecasts for 2017 and 2018 contains information on the status of those fish stocks. The need for data on these fish stocks has been identified, and measures are being taken to provide more data and comply with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Finland's whitefish stocks are mostly based on stocking, and River Tornionjoki is the only place where this species reproduces naturally to any larger extent. Research results show that it is necessary to regulate net fishing in order to reduce the fishing pressure on migratory whitefish feeding in the waters. Consequently a decree has been issued on limiting the smaller mesh sizes of nets used to catch whitefish. Whitefish fishing, too, is coastal fishing, where the fishing capacity is based on the gear used, not on the tonnage or propulsion power of the fishing vessels.

Finnish coastal waters are home to numerous local perch, pike-perch and pike stocks. Commercial fishing plays a greater role than recreational fishing in exploiting perch and pike stocks. The pike-perch catch is bigger in commercial than in recreational fishing. These species are targeted by coastal fishing, where the fishing capacity is based on the gear used, not on the tonnage or propulsion power of the fishing vessels.

When quotas are exceeded, this usually indicates overcapacity of a fleet segment. The Finnish fishing fleet's catch of fish species subject to a quota is based on quotas set by the European Union. Finland has not exceeded any of the quotas set for it by the EU since 1996. This has been ensured by regulating fishing and allocating resources to the supervision of fishing.

5.2. Financial indicators

Financial indicators show that the Finnish fishing fleet's profitability was poor in 2016. This is due to the decrease in the market price of herring and sprat and the ban on fish imports imposed by Russia.

However, any financial review of the Finnish fishing fleet should take into account the special characteristics of coastal fishing in Finland. In most of this fleet segment, fishing accounts for only part of the total income and is a source of secondary income. The formation of ice in the winter in Finland means that it is not possible for fishing vessels to operate all year round. Fishing in the winter can be carried out only with large trawlers, and even that is not possible in certain periods and areas. In this light, the profitability of coastal vessels, too, can be considered acceptable. It should be kept in mind, in particular, that the main catch of this fleet segment comes from non-quota fish stocks whose biological status is sustainable.

5.3. Technical indicators

Technical indicators can be used to assess the efficiency, activity and inactivity of a fleet segment.

The technical indicators in this report are assessed on the basis of data from 2008-2013. This data was included in a similar report on 30 September 2014. No newer data was available. It is estimated that new data would not differ much from earlier data.

The annual activity of the Finnish fishing fleet, measured as vessel utilisation, was rather low in the period under review. This was true, in particular, for coastal vessels (less than 12 m) and small offshore vessels (less than 18 m). This can be explained by Finland's special circumstances. The icy winter conditions in Finland do not allow year-round fishing, and therefore it is not possible to be at sea 180 days a year. As mentioned above, this form of fishing is not usually the principal economic activity of owners of coastal vessels, but rather a source of secondary income. Also as regards larger vessels (trawlers 24-40 m), it can be seen that their utilisation rate, on the basis of the target of 180 days spent at sea, was rather good and growing in 2012 and 2013. Likewise, as pointed out above, the profitability of these vessels, too, has improved markedly.

The report shows that in the Finnish fishing fleet, the inactivity rate is rather high especially in the fleet segment of small coastal vessels. This is partly due to statistical bias. In coastal fishing (vessels less than 10 m), commercial fishermen and vessel owners usually own a number of vessels, all of which are not used actively. It is typical in the sector in Finland to own one or two reserve vessels.

In contrast, there are but few if any inactive vessels in the fleet segment consisting of average-size (trawlers 18-24 m) and, in particular, large (trawlers 24-40 m) vessels. The minor periods of inactivity of certain vessels can be explained by several factors: change of generation, occupational choices, illnesses, etc. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that when the commercial profitability of certain units falls, the vessels are left unused while waiting for better times. In that case, other sources of livelihood are naturally used.

6. Information on the management of the fishing fleet register

Finland's central fisheries register (KAKE) was established in 2003 and taken into administrative use at the beginning of 2004. Since then, the supervisory authorities have had a reliable way of managing a variety of fisheries registers, including the fishing fleet register.

The fleet register system was overhauled in 2004. Since then, the authorities have been able to take screenshots of the register and send them to the Commission in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 26/2004. The content of the fleet register was inspected in the first screenshot (1 September 2004). Subsequent screenshots have passed the inspections with hardly any errors. The errors found have been corrected, and some of them have been discussed with Commission officials.

At present, the fleet register is being properly maintained and functions adequately. The register data is pertinent and accurate. The authorities have developed a national programme to verify the accuracy of register data. This will ensure even better data quality. The programme includes a confirmation function, which also facilitates management of the fleet.

7. Conclusions

The capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet has decreased continuously since Finland joined the European Union, also after the new base level was set on 1 January 2014. The number of pelagic trawlers, in particular, has been reduced in Finland. This has been done to lessen the herring fishing effort. Similarly, the fleet using passive gear has been reduced following the driftnet ban. Finland has complied well with the fishing fleet provisions.

The present report has shown the following:

- The overall capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet has decreased continuously since Finland joined the European Union;
- The low activity of Finland's fishing fleet composed of coastal vessels can be explained by the ice conditions, the nature of coastal fishing and the secondary nature of fishing activities; the inactivity is also related to the fact that commercial fishing operators often own several coastal vessels, some of which act as reserve vessels;
- The profitability of the Finnish fishing fleet is reasonable, considering the special characteristics of Finnish fisheries.
- Finland has not exceeded the quotas set for it since 1996;
- The herring and sprat stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet are at target level (Fmsy, MSY Btrigger) under Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013; however, the fishing mortality of the important herring stock in the Gulf of Bothnia is slightly higher than the target level;
- The cod stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet have not yet reached their target level, but their importance to the fishing fleet is marginal;
- All of the salmon stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet are not at or near target level; their fishing is being regulated through technical regulations, because the fishing pressure is based on the use of gear and the fleet capacity does not have much effect on the fishing pressure; and
- the non-quota stocks exploited by the Finnish fishing fleet are principally local stocks and there is no precise scientific assessment of their status; their fishing is being regulated through technical regulations, because the fishing pressure is based on the use of gear and the fleet capacity does not have much effect on the fishing pressure;

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry considers that the information provided in this report shows that the fishing capacity of the Finnish fishing fleet and the fishing opportunities are in balance as provided for in Article 22 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 and that there is no overcapacity in the fleet.