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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND  
THE COUNCIL**

**on Member States' efforts during 2014 to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing  
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### INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy (hereafter the Basic CFP Regulation)<sup>1</sup>, Member States are required to prepare an annual report on the situation of the fishing capacity of their fleets in relation to fishing opportunities. To facilitate a common approach across the Union these national fleet reports are prepared following the Guidelines for the analysis of the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities according to Art 22 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy (hereafter the Commission Guidelines) adopted by the Commission in 2014<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, if a Member State identifies a structural imbalance, it must submit an action plan for the segment(s) concerned, setting out the adjustment targets, tools and a clear time-frame for its implementation. On the basis of these national fleet reports<sup>3</sup>, the Commission prepares a report on Member States' efforts to achieve a sustainable balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities. This report covers the year 2014.

### MEMBER STATES' ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACTION PLANS

All 23 coastal Member States submitted their reports to the Commission for 2014. The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (hereafter STECF) was requested by the Commission to provide an analysis of balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunity using a standard approach across all EU fleet segments<sup>4</sup>. All balance indicators provided and used in the STECF EWGs 15-17 were calculated in accordance with Commission Guidelines.

The STECF concluded that considerable efforts have been made by Member States in preparing their national reports. However, the analysis of the national reports shows that not in all cases the indicators could be calculated for all

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<sup>1</sup> Article 22(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC, OJ L 354/22, 28.12.2013.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2014) 545 *final*.

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://s-antares.fish.cec.eu.int/front/index.cfm?method=FM\\_Reporting.AnnualReport](http://s-antares.fish.cec.eu.int/front/index.cfm?method=FM_Reporting.AnnualReport)

<sup>4</sup> Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), Assessment of balance indicators for key fleet segments and review of national reports on Member States efforts to achieve balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities (STECF-15-15), [https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/1166222/2015-10\\_STECF+15-15+-+Balance+capacity\\_JRC97991.pdf](https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/1166222/2015-10_STECF+15-15+-+Balance+capacity_JRC97991.pdf)

fleet segments. This is either due to lack of data or, in the case of economic and technical indicators, due to clustering of segments (which is done in order to ensure the protection of commercial confidentiality). Data deficiencies lead to difficulties in the calculation of balance indicators for fleet segments, making them unreliable or non-representative. As noted by STECF, to improve the coverage and appropriateness of indicators, Member States need to provide more comprehensive data sets with higher coverage of fleet segments and more analytical stock assessment, which points towards biological and survey data collected under the data collection framework (hereafter DCF)<sup>5</sup>. In addition, catch data, rather than landings, could improve coverage and appropriateness of indicators. This could be linked to discards data coming from logbooks, in other words, data collected under the Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy<sup>6</sup> (hereafter Control Regulation) and used in DCF. Another issue is catch and effort data at the appropriate geographical stratification in the Mediterranean, making it impossible to link capacity to effort and ultimately to fishing opportunities. In addition, data on small scale fisheries is problematic, because Member States do not collect data to the same extent as for other fleet segments. As a result, small scale fisheries are, by large, not monitored in terms of effort, landings, catches. The analysis does show that some fleet segments such as trawlers are economically dependent on stocks that are fished above MSY fishing pressure levels. It also confirms the low vessel utilisation in many Member States. These observations justify continued active fleet capacity management and adjustment where required. Member States should continue to address the fishing capacity of their fleets in order to achieve economically viable fleets that operate and exploit the marine biological resources sustainably.

Under the Common Fisheries Policy, Member States are required to put in place measures to adjust the fishing capacity of their fleets to their fishing opportunities over time. In concrete situations of segments with identified structural overcapacity, the action plan to reduce the imbalance is a transparent and effective means in the pursuit of the balance between the fishing fleet capacity and the fishing opportunities over time.

There were more Member States action plans in 2015 than 2014. In total, 17 Member States<sup>7</sup> identified fleet segments which they consider to be

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<sup>5</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 of 25 February 2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy, OJ L 60/1, 5.3.2008.

<sup>6</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Union control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006, OJ L 343/1, 22.12.2009. .

<sup>7</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. The action plans are available by the link indicated in the Annex VI.

imbalanced, or showing potential signs of being imbalanced, using biological, economic or technical indicators and/or supplementary information, and therefore requiring action plans according to the Commission Guidelines. A further 5 Member States<sup>8</sup> concluded that no fleet segments clearly demonstrated imbalance and did not submit action plans.

In this context the annual report plays an important role. Under the Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (hereafter EMFF Regulation)<sup>9</sup>, the submission of a national report on the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities in line with Commission guidelines is an ex-ante conditionality for approval of the EMFF Operational Programme. Furthermore, specific measures funded by the EMFF such as permanent cessation, engine replacement or start-up support for young fishermen can only be supported by the EMFF in fleet segments where there is identified overcapacity (in the case of permanent cessation) or where there is no structural overcapacity (in the case of engine replacement and start-up support for young fishers).

Thus, the action plans allow Member States to identify those measures, including permanent cessation, foreseen to reduce fishing capacity for the segments not considered in balance with their fishing opportunities. Over the next few years, EMFF support for permanent cessation measures will help to generate a reduction of the capacity of the EU fleet capacity and consequently ease pressure on marine resources.

#### **THE STATE OF THE FISHING FLEET CAPACITY IN THE UNION**

The Common Fisheries Policy (hereafter the CFP) also requires Member States to ensure that from 2014 the fishing capacity of their fleet remains under the limits of the capacity ceilings set out in the Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013. As noted above, fleet capacity continues to be reduced. Following the trend over the last ten years (See Annex III and IV), between January 2014 and November 2015 the fishing capacity of the EU 28 Member States decreased by 0.8% in kilowatts (KW) and by 1.3% in gross tonnage (GT) (See Annex I).

As of November 2015, 85.065 vessels were registered in the EU fleet register with an overall capacity of 1.627,125 GT and 6.474,617 KW. This shows a reduction in 2015 (excluding in the outermost regions) of 0.6% in number of vessels (See Annex I). The fishing capacity of the EU fleet was 18.42 % below the capacity ceilings for tonnage and 11.60% below the power ceilings (See Graph1). For the EU's outermost regions which account for 5.4 % of the total EU fleet, during the period between January 2014 and November 2015,

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<sup>8</sup> Belgium, Estonia, Finland Netherlands, Romania.

<sup>9</sup> See Annex IV of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 149/1, 20.5.2014.

fleet capacity decreased by 0.1% in GT and increased by 0.9 in KW (see Annex V).

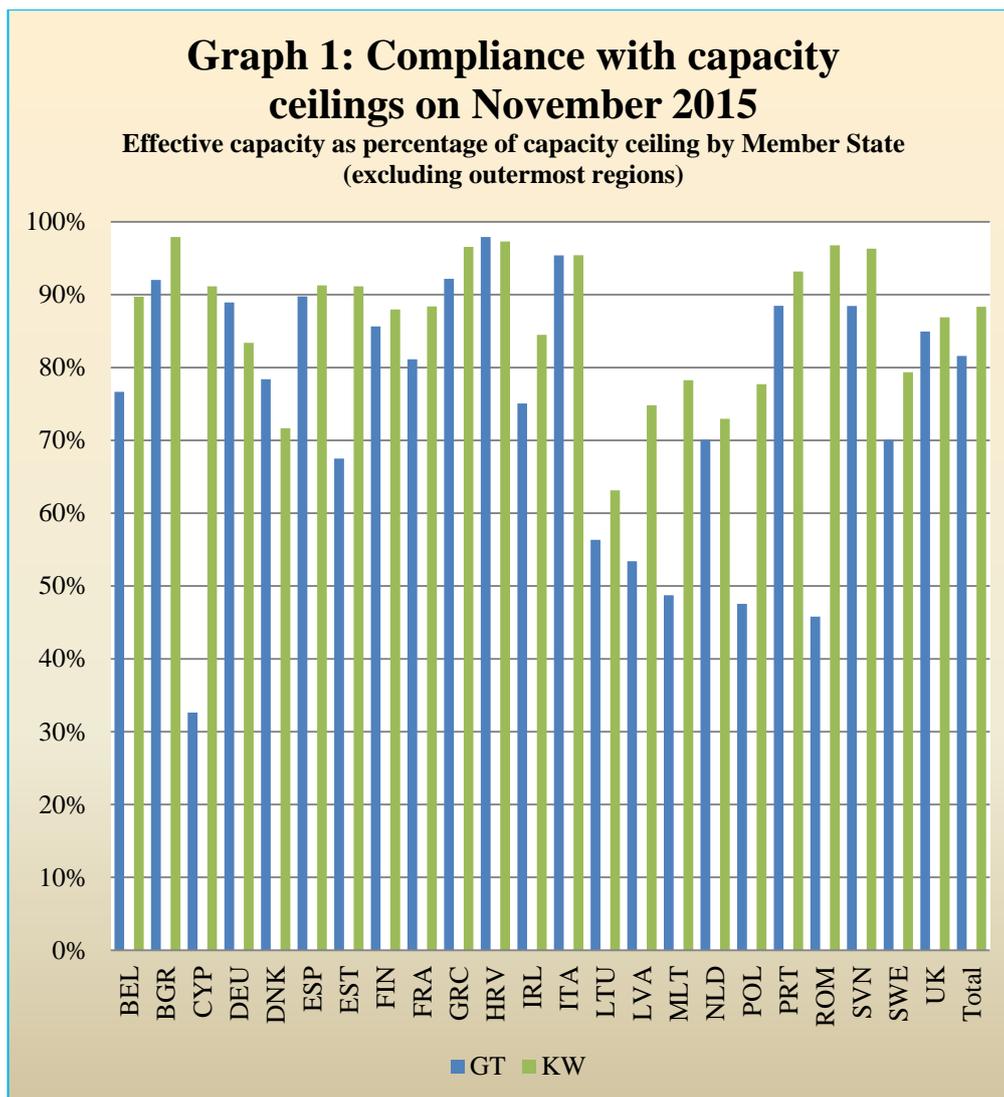
To ensure accuracy of the measurements in the fleet register, Member States are obliged in line with the Control regulation to systematically certify new engines, and replacement and technically modified engines of more than 120 kW for vessels subject to a fishing effort regime as from January 2012 and all vessels as from January 2013. Also, in accordance with the Control Regulation, Member States must undertake data verification on the basis of sampling plans. Similarly, when information indicates that the engine power is greater than the power stated on the vessel's fishing licence, Member States should undertake physical verifications.

As of end December 2015 eighteen Member States<sup>10</sup> adopted a sampling plan for the verification of engine power.

As a result of 16 EU pre-contentious cases, the Commission has received all sampling plans on engine power from the Member States. The Commission is currently carrying-out audits, in order to monitor their effective implementation.

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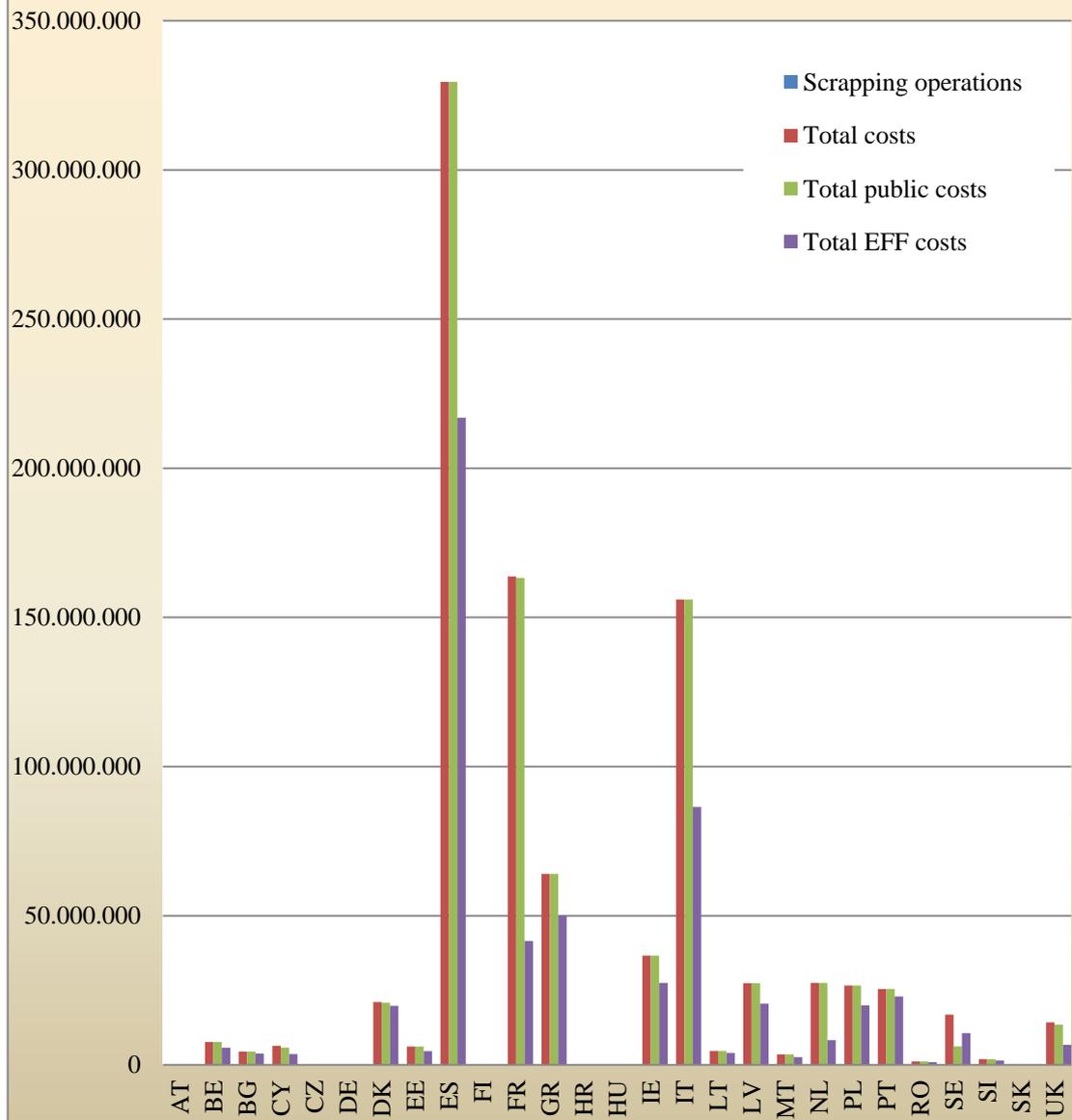
<sup>10</sup> Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.



In the period 2007-2015, Member States have used permanent cessation measures under the European Fisheries Fund to decommission vessels from their fleet and reduce capacity (See Graph 2). Between 2007 and 31 May 2015, 4.267 vessels were decommissioned with public support, with a total public expenditure of almost 935 million euro, of which 546 million euro was from the EFF (See Annex VII)<sup>11</sup>. Vessels decommissioned with support from the EFF cannot be replaced, thereby ensuring that overall fleet capacity reduces. A further 2.077 vessels (GT 88014.37 - KW 215320.6) were removed from the fleet without public aid, although capacity withdrawn without public aid can be reintroduced.

<sup>11</sup> See Article 40 of Commission Regulation (EC) No498/2007 of 26 March 2007, laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 on the European Fisheries Fund, OJ L 120/1, 10.05.2007.

**Graph 2: Percentage of EFF contribution for decommissioning 2007-2015 (EUR)**



Fleets in the outermost regions of France, Portugal and Spain are also below their respective capacity ceilings. These fleets (total number of fishing vessels 4,562) are considered separately from the mainland fleets in Annex II of Regulation (EC) 1380/2013. On November 2015 the overall ceilings for the outermost regions decreased very slightly (-1.4%).

## **REGIONAL ASSESSMENT**

### **ATLANTIC, NORTHEAST**

The fishing capacity in terms of gross tonnage (hereafter GT) and kilowatts (hereafter KW) has generally decreased following the trend of the last years. STECF reports that for most fleet segments in the Atlantic Northeast for which economic, technical and biological indicator values could be calculated, values over the period 2009-2013 were indicating progressively less imbalance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities. In the Northeast Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, fishing has generally progressed towards maximum sustainable yield (hereafter MSY). This also may be linked with the continuous reduction of the fleet capacity ceilings that were achieved during the last years.

### **MEDITERRANEAN SEA AND BLACK SEA**

The situation of the stocks in the Mediterranean and Black sea shows that almost 92 % of assessed stocks are overfished. In this regard, a number of action plans have been presented by the Member States to the Commission, in order to address situations of imbalance. Concerning the economic indicators STECF reports that trends in performance over 2009-2013 were improving for the majority of fleet segments. Values for the vessel-utilisation-ratio indicate increasing imbalance for most fleet segments that were assessed during that period.

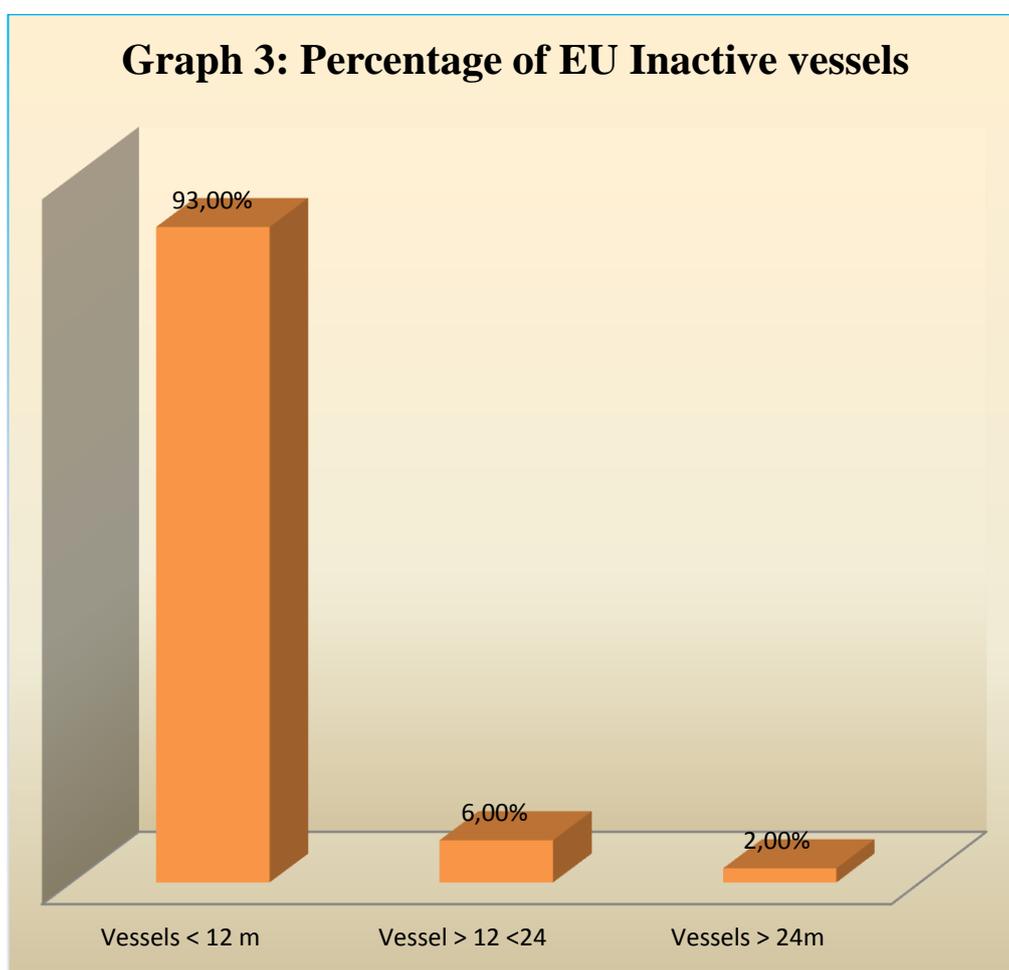
## **OBSERVATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE MEMBER STATES REPORTS AND THE STECF ANALYSIS**

On the basis of the analysis by the STECF, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Considerable progress has been made in the quality of the submitted national reports. However, in order to increase the consistency of the resulting indicator values the coverage and quality of the balance indicators, especially the biological indicators, should be improved.
2. The analysis by STECF shows that some of the indicators could not be calculated for all fleet segments due to lack of data or, in case of economic and technical indicators, due to clustering segments together, which is done in order to protect commercial confidentiality.
3. In 2014, there was an overall increase in the number of fleet segments for which Member States have identified structural overcapacity. As a result, 17 action plans were submitted by Member States which contain the adjustment targets and tools to achieve a balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities and a clear time-frame for their implementation.

Member States have opted for a variety of measures to reduce capacity including the introduction of transferable fishing concessions or permanent cessation to be supported by the EMFF.

4. The introduction of an ex-ante conditionality on the submission of the fleet report in line with Commission guidelines as part of the approval of the EMFF Operational Programme has strengthened the link between EU funding and compliance with CFP rules.
5. A general overview of the EU fleet shows low vessel utilisation. In some Member States the level is somewhat higher. The highest levels of inactivity can be seen in fleets of small-scale vessels, i.e. vessels measuring less than 12 m. 93% of inactive vessels were under 12m in length, while vessels between 12m and 24m accounted for 6% and vessels over 24m less than 2% of inactive vessels (See Graph 3).<sup>12</sup>



6. Overall, there has been significant progress in recent years in efforts to achieve balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities across the EU. The reduction in fleet capacity in recent years has helped to

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<sup>12</sup> \*Source: STECF assessment of balance indicators for key fleet segments and review of national reports on Member States efforts to achieve balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities (STECF 15-15, p 99 )

improve the situation of fish stocks which are overexploited moving the fisheries in the direction of the maximum sustainable yield targets. In addition, better implementation of the Guidelines has helped to improve the analysis of imbalance within different fleets. However, reports by the Member States reveal that for specific fleet segments, further efforts are needed to reduce the identified imbalances, especially in the Mediterranean Sea.