

EN E-000597/2022 Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission (7.4.2022)

1. The 'Eel Regulation¹' provides a framework for the protection and sustainable exploitation of the European eel, enhanced by the fishing closures under annual fishing opportunities regulations adopted by the Council. The Water Framework Directive² and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive³ play an important role in eel stock recovery. The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) also works on possible management measures on eels⁴. The Commission is not yet in a position to inform about future measures but it is clear that more efforts are needed to implement the Eel Regulation with a greater focus on non-fisheries impacts⁵. In light of the recent advice of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on eels⁶, the Commission launched a stakeholder consultation⁷ on how to best implement this advice. By mid-April 2022, ICES will also issue its advice on the progress of implementing Eel Management Plans by Member States. It will inform decision-making on possible management approaches. As eel conservation and management are wide-ranging issues, the management measures will need to take into account fisheries and environmental considerations as well as socio-economic impacts.

2. The 'Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030'⁸ aim at supporting the growth of aquaculture in the EU. Capture-based aquaculture such as eel farming is not the most sustainable practice in the long term due to its dependence on wild stocks, which can become scarce or extinct. The Commission will develop in 2023 a 'Guidance document on environmental performance in the aquaculture sector' that will cover the mapping of good practices. 1 Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 of 18 September 2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel, OJ L 248, 22.9.2007, p. 17. 2 Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1, as amended. 3 Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive), OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19, as amended. 4 GFCM Recommendation GFCM/42/2018/1 establishing a multiannual management plan for European eel in the Mediterranean Sea. The results of a research programme on European eel has recently been finalised and a dedicated advice for the management of European eel in the Mediterranean Sea will be adopted by the GFCM scientific body in June 2022. 5

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/1696-Evaluation-of-the-EelRegulation_en

6 ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catches in all habitats in 2022. This advice applies to both recreational and commercial catches and includes catches of glass eels for restocking and aquaculture. All other anthropogenic mortalities should be minimised and eliminated where possible. See:

<https://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Forms/DispForm.aspx?ID=38321>

7 Requests have been sent to Regional Groups of Member States and Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy.

8 COM(2021) 236.