

New developments in the EU Common Fisheries Policy – how to integrate the preservation of ecosystem services in fisheries management

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Already in the treaty of Rome the European Union (at that time the European Community) decided to introduce a common policy for fisheries. However, due to the relative unimportance of fisheries at that time no regulations on fisheries management were adopted. This changed in the 1970ies with the introduction of the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ, 200 nautical miles) and new member states with large EEZs (e.g. UK, Denmark, Spain, Portugal). The EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) was then introduced in 1982 with the first basic regulation. Since then the CFP was often criticized for not fulfilling the objective of a sustainable exploitation of marine living resources and for creating huge negative effects on ecosystem services of the marine ecosystems.

With the adoption of a new basic regulation for the CFP in 2013 (the CFP must be revised every 10 years) the preservation of ecosystem services will play a larger role than in the past. The CFP is in the meantime part of the overall EU Maritime Policy and shall form the basis of measures in fisheries to also fulfill the FFH/Bird Protection Directives (NATURA 2000 network) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Several of the new instruments in the CFP will have to prove that, including the ban of discards (overboard throwing of bycatch of e.g. non-target species), the direct introduction of protected areas for preservation of nursery or spawning grounds or the move to maximum sustainable yield as management goal of fish stocks.

In the paper I will firstly give a short overview on the new basic regulation with a focus on the new instruments to preserve ecosystem services. In the second part I will discuss if these instruments can fulfill the objectives of the EU Maritime Policy (via Natura 2000 or MSFD) and what experiences we have in fisheries management with such kind of regulations (this is analyzed at the moment in the EU project SOCIOEC). As we have now the first proposals for management measures in Natura 2000 sites and to fulfill MSFD objectives I will, thirdly, describe the process of implementing the new measures in Europe via the CFP. In a fourth section I will then formulate conclusions for improvements of future fisheries management measures.

Teaser

The EU Common Fisheries Policy is now part of the overall EU maritime policy. Following from that the introduction of new management measures shall improve the fulfillment of the general objectives including preservation of ecosystem services. If this seems to be achievable will be discussed in the paper and an overview on new policy measures given.