

Entry-exit: preventing fleet expansion

Since January 2003, Member States have had to respect a very strict entry-exit regime for the capacity of their fleet, measured in terms of both tonnage and power. This ensures that the capacity of national fleets can never be any greater than it was on that date. In fact, the size of the EU fleet is being reduced at a fairly constant rate of some 2% a year. Successive EU enlargements have led to moderate increases in overall fishing capacity, but the global trend to reduction has remained unchanged.

Under the CFP, any new capacity entering a Member State's fleet must be matched by the withdrawal of capacity of at least the same amount. At the same time, as a general rule, capacity leaving the fleet with public aid cannot be replaced. This ensures that the capacity reductions brought about through decommissioning programmes are definitive. However, it is permitted for Member States to rebuild 4% of the tonnage that had been decommissioned with public aid if the increase is designed to improve on-board safety, working conditions, hygiene or product quality. Member States have to give priority to small-scale fishing vessels when applying this derogation.

The implementing rules for the fleet policy allow for the adjustment of these initial capacity levels to take account of the entries of vessels into the fleet that were decided between January 1998 and 31 December 2002. These entries have to comply with the rules already cited. A similar provision relating to the capacity of their fishing fleet on the date of accession applies to the Member States that joined the Union in May 2004 and January 2007.

Another concept used in fleet management under the CFP is that of reference levels. These are calculated on the basis of the global final objectives of the Fourth Multi-annual Guidance Programme (MAGP IV) as established by Article 12 of Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002. The total capacity of the fleet expressed in terms of either tonnage or power may not exceed these levels. However, this condition has had little effect in practice, since the size of the majority of Member State fleets since the last reform was already significantly below those final objectives.

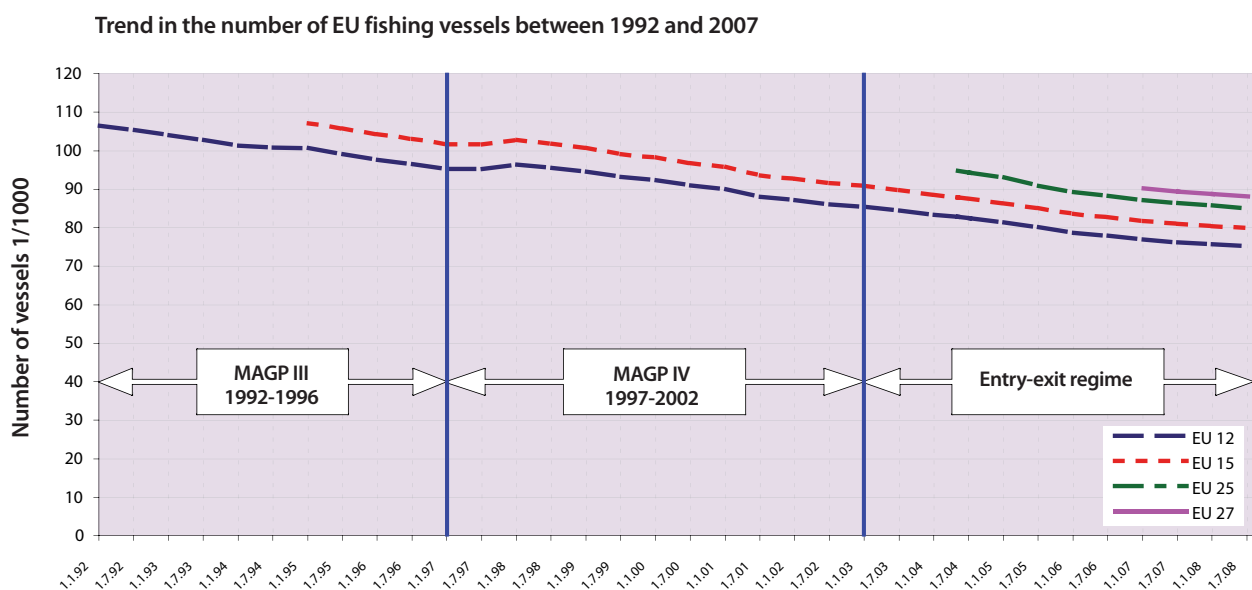
The implementation of these provisions results in a maximum capacity for each Member State fleet expressed in terms of both tonnage and power.

Community Fishing Fleet Register

In 2004, the new Community Fleet Register (CFR) was established. It is the main tool for monitoring the size of the EU fishing fleet. Member States are obliged to transmit electronically on a quarterly basis all the relevant information on the characteristics of the EU's 88 236 commercial fishing vessels (as of December 2007), together with information on entries to, and exits from the fleet. The data is available for public consultation via a website called the Community Fleet Register On the Net (Front). It may be found at: ec.europa.eu/fisheries/fleet/index.cfm

The legal basis for the entry-exit regime is Article 13 of Council Regulation 2371/2002 and Articles 6 and 7 of Commission Regulation 1438/2003.

Figure 1



NB: The increase in the number of vessels shown in 1998 is due to the inclusion in the Community Fishing Fleet register of the vessels registered in the French Outermost Regions.

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Figure 2

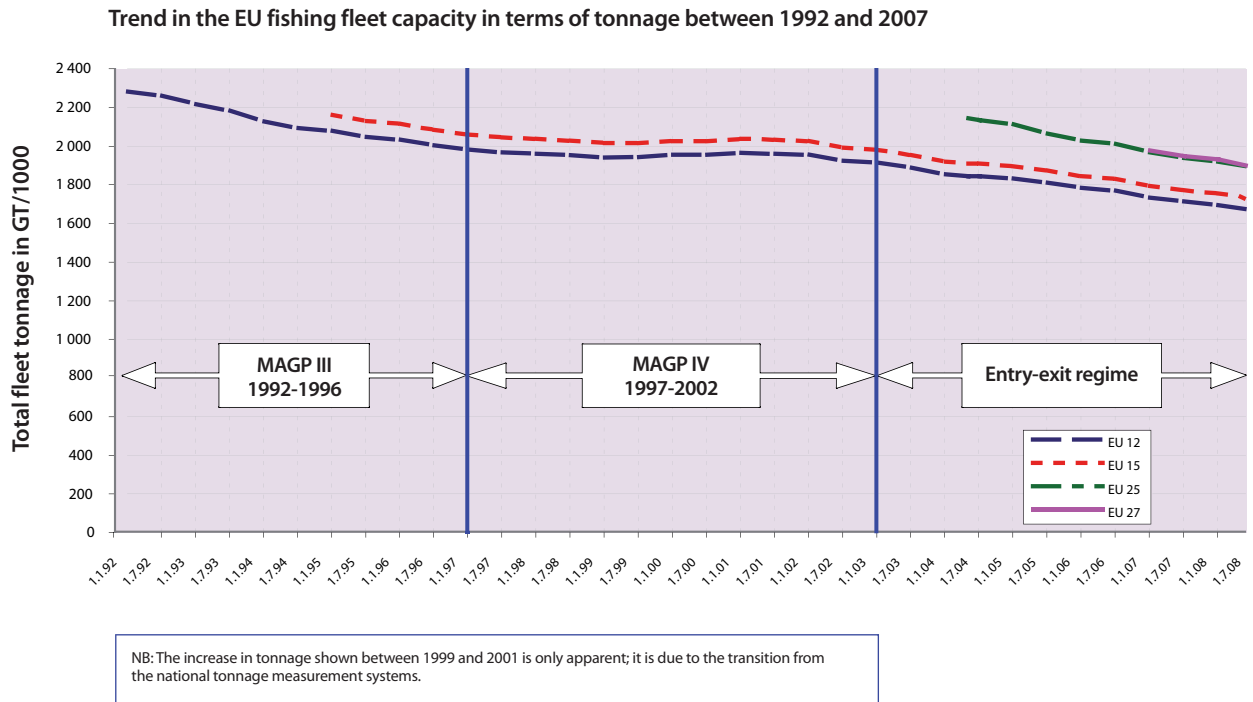


Figure 3

