

**Statement of Polish non-governmental organizations concerning the ban on cod fishing on the Baltic Sea:**

**LET'S GIVE THE BALTIC COD POPULATION A CHANCE TO REGENERATE**

In July, the European Commission stated that Polish fishermen had exhausted this year's fishing quotas and introduced a ban on cod fishing effective until the end of 2007. Despite this ruling, Polish fishermen have announced they are going to sail out to sea on September 15, which is the day when the protection season for cod expires. If the ban is broken, Poland will face serious consequences, including suspension of EU subsidies for the fisheries sector and a trial before the European Court of Justice.

The present conflict between Polish fishermen and the EU is just a part of the complex problem of intensive and often illegal fishing for Baltic fish, which is making it virtually impossible for the Eastern stock of cod to be restored. According to scientists with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), complete closure of fisheries in the Eastern Baltic Sea for at least one year is the only chance to revive the cod population. In response to the demands of scientific advisory bodies, the European Commission has proposed to limit the fishing of the Eastern cod stock by 23% in 2007.

**The undersigned non-governmental organizations take the position that Polish fishermen, who are obviously not the only users of our sea, should comply with the EU regulations.**

We believe that the conservation of the shrinking population of the Baltic cod by restricting fishing for this species and preventing sea poaching and the degradation of the Baltic ecosystem must become the priority of marine management, including the fishermen themselves. Therefore we appeal to fishermen to refrain from ostentatious violation of the law and would like to remind them that their jobs and the fate of much of the cod-processing industry depend on the state of the cod population. Non-governmental organizations, scientists, the government, and the European Commission should be unanimous in this matter. The cod population must be regenerated as soon as possible with the future of fisheries in mind.

We would like to remind everyone that in the 1990's, similarly ignorant approach to protecting the cod population on the coast of Newfoundland resulted in the complete destruction of the cod stocks, which in turn led to the collapse of the entire fisheries-related sector in the region. As a result, 30,000 people lost their jobs. We must not allow a similar situation to occur in Poland.

The Maritime Economy Ministry has enormous funds at its disposal. By 2013, Poland can take advantage of 651,000,000 euros from the European Fisheries Fund. It is high time our government made sensible use of this money, with a view to shaping the future of Polish fisheries in the spirit of responsibility for their sustained ability to exploit the natural resources of the Baltic Sea.

While the ban on cod fishing is in effect, we should also ensure the survival of our fishing resources — particularly people, but also equipment.

**Signatories:**

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