

Brussels, 22 May 2026
(OR. en)

9449/1/26
REV 1

PECHE 182

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 26
May 2026:
Call for a Joint Approach to Address the Impacts of Fish-eating Predators,
in Particular the Great Cormorant
- Information from Czechia, supported by Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia,
Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden

AGRIFISH COUNCIL 26/05/2026

Background Note

Call for a Joint Approach to Address the Impacts of Fish-eating Predators, in Particular the Great Cormorant

Information from the Czech Republic, supported by Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Slovakia.

The annual fish consumption of an adult great cormorant is estimated at approximately 180 kg, whereas the average fish consumption per EU citizen amounts to around 23 kg per person per year. With an estimated population of approximately 2 million individuals, the total annual fish consumption by cormorants in Europe thus reaches roughly 360,000 tonnes. This scale clearly illustrates the urgency of the situation and the need to reopen the discussion on the growing impacts of predation, in particular by the great cormorant.

These impacts are increasingly burdening fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems in a number of Member States, undermining both the economic sustainability of the sector and the Union's ability to achieve its environmental objectives. A shared objective should therefore be the establishment of effective and coordinated management at EU level, aimed at maintaining the population at an ecologically and economically acceptable level.

The great cormorant is a highly mobile species with significant cross-border migration, and the issue therefore cannot be effectively addressed through isolated national measures alone. The absence of a common European framework has resulted in a fragmented approach among Member States, inefficient use of available instruments, including derogations, and ultimately reduced effectiveness of the measures adopted. The current approach focuses primarily on preventive measures which, in practice, are difficult to apply in open waters, particularly in rivers, where the impacts of predation reach levels comparable to those observed in aquaculture. Similarly, recently published guidance on the application of the Birds Directive does not sufficiently reflect the spatial dimension of cormorant predation.

The Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Slovakia consider that an effective solution requires a coordinated European approach based on scientific evidence, regional cooperation and the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders. To this end, the adoption of a European Management Plan for the great cormorant is considered key. The framework of such a plan, presented in 2025 by EIFAAC in cooperation with the Polish Presidency, constitutes a solid and sufficiently developed basis reflecting the biological, ecological and socio-economic aspects of the issue, and can be further built upon without delay. We therefore consider it unnecessary to initiate the development of a new conceptual document.

In particular, a European Management Plan should enable the establishment of harmonised pan-European population monitoring, strengthen regional coordination among Member States, ensure the systematic involvement of relevant stakeholders, including representatives of fisheries and aquaculture, and provide a framework for adaptive population management based on up-to-date scientific data. In the short term, initiating the implementation of this framework would allow concrete steps to be taken in the areas of monitoring, coordination and structured dialogue with the sector. A key prerequisite is an open and structured dialogue between environmental protection representatives and representatives of the affected sectors.

In light of the above, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Slovakia call for the immediate launch of work on a European Management Plan for the great cormorant, in close cooperation with EIFAAC.
