OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on untapping the potential of Research and Innovation in the Blue Economy to create Jobs and Growth

(2014/2240(INI))

Rapporteur: Isabelle Thomas
PA_NonLeg
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. whereas seas and oceans have at last been recognised as powerful drivers of the European economy and have significant potential as regards innovation, growth and jobs; whereas, however, that potential can only be tapped if certain conditions are fulfilled;

B. whereas one of those conditions is a definition that includes all the activities in the blue economy and whereas these must be analysed according to an integrated approach aimed at creating a blue ecosystem encompassing all stakeholders;

C. whereas coastal areas have specific characteristics which set them apart and determine their opportunities for development in the medium and long term;

D. whereas it is currently believed that the number of molecules in the sea is considerably greater than the number of molecules on land, and that they offer incredible potential for research in the fields of healthcare, cosmetics and biotechnology;

E. whereas the integrated maritime policy acts as a strong lever for blue economy activities, especially when it comes to finding an integrated response to all the challenges now facing Europe’s seas;

F. whereas peripheral and island regions often have a maritime focus, and the development of the blue economy contributes to ensuring the balance and equality of all territories of the EU;

G. whereas under the previous CFP fisheries development groups proved to be very useful as tools for creating employment and wealth and social and territorial cohesion, as well as in taking decisions and playing an active role in their own development;

H. whereas particular attention should be paid to the outermost island regions that are intrinsically linked to the blue economy, whose biotope is especially rich and whose specific climate offers opportunities for the development of new forms of marine energy production;

I. whereas marine spatial planning and the integrated management of coastal areas are vital management tools when it comes to preventing conflicts and optimising interdependence between various sectors, and whereas, in that connection, the move away from ICZM at EU level is deplorable;

J. whereas, despite the move away from ICZM at EU level, it is essential to take account of land-sea interaction, to organise all maritime activities in such a way that they can coexist, and to avoid conflicts of use, manage interdependencies and ensure cooperation and good governance;

K. whereas land-sea interaction concerns in particular the pollution of the sea, often by land-based activities, while sea-based activities can also have consequences for operators on
land, e.g. the fish processing sector, the construction of power plants, ports, dockyards and training facilities;

L. whereas the gathering, processing and sharing of data are inherent to investment in the blue economy and are essential in order to guarantee the technical, economic and financial viability of such investment;

M. whereas it is currently estimated that between 3 and 5 % of the EU’s GDP comes from the overall maritime sector, which employs around 5.6 million people and generates EUR 495 billion for the European economy;

N. whereas blue growth must be fully consistent with the concept of sustainable development and use in a broad sense, environmental, economic and social, and this can only be achieved if the aims of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive are rigorously pursued up to 2020;

O. whereas the sustainable development of maritime policies should not replicate the mistakes that have been made on land; whereas the seas and oceans are a common good that must be maintained as such and must in no way be privatised; whereas, therefore, the authorities must protect them from market speculation, overexploitation and activities that could cause changes having an adverse impact on life, biodiversity and the climate; whereas environmental impact surveys should be carried out before the launch of new activities;

P. whereas the sustainable development of maritime activities should in addition have a strong social focus, and improved workers’ rights and job security will also help to drive growth;

Q. whereas a political aim is not a priority until it has a dedicated budget;

1. Urges the Commission to take Parliament’s proposals into account and to propose a definition of the blue economy that covers all existing or future production and employment at sea, as well as the onshore ramifications thereof; calls on the Commission to specify those activities in the EU most likely to be of use in developing and consolidating the blue economy and, to that end, to draw up a non-exhaustive, inclusive list that covers, as a minimum, the following activities: maritime technology and innovation, sustainable fisheries, shipbuilding, renewable marine energy, sustainable seabed mining, marine biotechnology, seaweed farming, fish farming, shellfish farming, coastal and maritime tourism, the development of offshore platforms, shipping, the cleaning-up of the sea and port areas, undersea pipeline and cable burial, and seawater desalination;

2. Urges the Commission to focus not only on innovation in new activities but also to consider the potential for innovation offered by all maritime activities;

3. Stresses the importance of fishing and aquaculture to the blue economy; considers that the competitiveness of fishing activities should go hand in hand with the sustainable management of fish stocks in the framework of CFP rules;

4. Calls for the balanced development and stronger regulation of aquaculture projects so as
not to cause degradation in the areas in the vicinity of aquaculture facilities, with specific
reference to the negative impact on local economies arising from the genetic degradation
of wild fish stocks caused by escaped farmed fish, and the degradation in the context of
habitat destruction and alteration alongside chemical, pathogenic and parasitic
contamination from large-scale intensive aquaculture affecting ecosystems;

5. Stresses that the seas and oceans are already subject to enormous anthropogenic pressure
and to the problems which that pressure causes (pollution, environmental change, climate
change, overexploitation of resources, overfishing), but that they retain major reserves of
unspoilt nature and of environments that are difficult to access and are hence undamaged;
urges the Commission, before it draws up a proposal for a definition, to carry out a proper,
thoroughgoing assessment of the impact on biodiversity, the climate, fishing, the economy
and jobs of development activities under the banner of the ‘blue economy’;

6. Points out that while activities like fishing can have a traditional aspect, they also
inherently contain the potential for innovation, e.g. the development of new fishery
control tools, or the building of highly selective fishing vessels that are fuel-efficient, emit
relatively little CO2, and are safer and more comfortable;

7. Stresses that the protection and safeguarding of marine natural environments is a
fundamental precondition for being able to maintain, support and develop blue economies
such as fishing and tourism;

8. Calls on the Commission, in close coordination with the Member States, to assess the
financial requirements for blue growth, in particular in terms of data gathering, research
and training; suggests that a plan for such financing be drawn up by 2020; insists in this
regard on the contribution of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF);

9. Deeply regrets the programming delays relating to the EMFF in certain Member States;

10. Calls on the Commission to specify all the European funds available to finance blue
economy activities and to concentrate them under a single platform accessible to citizens;
also calls on the Commission to earmark funding for innovation and blue growth to
finance fundamental research, R&D, training, job creation, business start-ups, SMEs,
social enterprises, cooperatives, education and apprenticeships, reducing coastal poverty,
biotechnological development, transport links, energy interconnectivity, shipbuilding and
repairs, coastal access to broadband, environmental protection and the sale of innovative
products, services and processes;

11. Maintains that strategic planning should be laid down for blue economy activities, as
should forms of direct financing and an action plan, in order to galvanise this sector into
life by 2020; considers that each of the activities singled out should encompass specific
ideas on subjects ranging from research cooperation through infrastructure investment and
cooperation arrangements, which Member States should be called upon to implement by
making use of EU funds, financing from the European Investment Bank (EIB), and
private-sector involvement, following the practices applied under or using the European
Fund for Strategic Investments, whose aim is to foster significant infrastructure
investments and ensure the financing of innovative projects; thus asks the Commission to
add the development of the blue economy as one of the requirements to be met for a
project to be eligible for access to the European Strategic Investment Fund;
12. Stresses the importance of maritime spatial planning for ensuring the sustainable and coordinated development of the blue economy; and thus requests the strengthening of the governance of the Integrated Maritime Policy, at both EU and maritime basin level;

13. Stresses the importance of acquiring a more thorough knowledge of the oceans and improving the skills necessary to apply new technologies to the marine environment;

14. Insists that a blue economy KIC be set up to promote research in this field and to identify it as a priority aim of the EU rather than an optional maritime strand of an energy or food objective;

15. Invites the Commission to establish an agency that would be responsible for the development of the blue economy, data gathering, and the coordination of projects seeking to achieve that aim;

16. Calls on the Commission to take specific steps to enhance contacts and cooperation between the regional and national levels within the EU, e.g. by means of INTERREG and the sea basin strategies; calls on the Commission to bring together the international protagonists operating in the blue economy and take the lead in an international project to boost this new sector of economic activity;

17. Calls on the Commission to take the necessary steps to strengthen the role of fisheries development groups within the new CFP, providing them with more resources so that they can press ahead in order to develop their role and promote such interterritorial cooperation;

18. Calls on the Commission to incorporate the concept of smart specialisation into sea basin strategies, so that maritime research and innovation acquire a regional focus and regional core skills are promoted in a targeted manner;

19. Calls on the Commission to encourage business creation in the blue economy by offering incentives for entrepreneurship and for start-ups likely to make their mark in the maritime sector;

20. Insists that the Commission guarantee transparency in the use of funding and in ensuring that the findings of research that it has funded stay in the public domain, in accordance with the European public share of total funding in relation to any private share, while at the same time ensuring that all interested parties have easy and open access to that information free of charge and promoting the dissemination of such findings;

21. Urges the Commission to revive and encourage marine spatial planning and the integrated management of coastal areas at EU level;

22. Maintains that it is necessary to determine and promote traditional, cultural, and tourist activities which can capitalise on the specific features of local communities and help preserve non-industrial fishing;

23. Calls on the Commission to enhance and harmonise the systems that make it possible to process, use and disseminate data;
24. Urges the Commission to promote the gathering of regularly updated scientific data on the situation with regard to marine stocks in both EU and non-EU waters, in cooperation with other international organisations;

25. Calls on the Commission to support both higher education and vocational training, as well as lifelong learning programmes ensuring that the blue economy perspective is included therein and that awareness is raised among young people, raising its profile across all levels of education; expresses concern at the impact that the EFSI as proposed by the Commission would have on research and development, considering the fact that EUR 2.7 billion would be taken from Horizon 2020 over the next 5 years;

26. Insists that every encouragement be given to the setting-up of training programmes bringing together all the maritime professions; stipulates in this respect that the interaction between the various maritime training courses should foster the development of integrated maritime activities and ensure that the skills acquired can be used in a broader context.
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>6.5.2015</th>
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<td>Result of final vote</td>
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<td>Members present for the final vote</td>
<td>Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Alain Cadec, Linnéa Engström, Raymond Finch, Ian Hudghton, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ni Riada, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jaroslaw Wałęsa</td>
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<td>Substitutes present for the final vote</td>
<td>Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, José Blanco López, Ole Christensen, Jens Gieseke, Sylvie Goddyn, Anja Hazekamp, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Francisco José Millán Mon, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar</td>
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<td>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</td>
<td>Peter Lundgren, Miguel Viegas</td>
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