



2017/2208(INI)

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DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Regional Development

Lagging regions in the EU
(2017/2208(INI))

Rapporteur: Nicola Caputo

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- having regard to its resolution of 12 April 2016 on innovation and diversification of small-scale coastal fishing in fisheries-dependent regions¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2017 on the role of fisheries-related tourism in the diversification of fisheries²,
- A. whereas fishing, particularly small-scale artisanal fishing, is a traditional activity in most coastal areas of the ‘low-growth regions’ (such as areas of the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, and of Greece, Spain and Portugal) and ‘low-income regions’ (such as areas of Bulgaria and Romania) referred to in the relevant Commission report;
- B. whereas fishing has continued to decline, further contributing to the severe economic decline of many coastal areas, including those in the lagging regions, resulting in depopulation, with inhabitants leaving for areas offering better employment and education prospects;
- C. whereas some coastal fishing areas in the lagging regions are situated near economically developed regions and tourist destinations, but are nonetheless unable to achieve adequate economic growth;
- D. whereas the pressure to make use of the sea’s resources is growing in such regions, with the fisheries sector often marginalised in favour of tourism, even though the two sectors are compatible and complementary;
1. Stresses the importance of fishing and sustainable coastal and maritime tourism for the development of an all-inclusive social and eco-friendly maritime economy;
 2. Notes that diversification has become a necessity for many small-scale fishermen almost everywhere, but particularly for those in the lagging regions, as their income from fishing activities is often inadequate and they need to turn to additional sources of income;
 3. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to invest in education in order to attract high-quality human resources to the fisheries sector in the lagging regions and ensure that they remain there;
 4. Calls on the Member States and local and regional authorities to provide sustainable innovative infrastructure, including fast internet connections and good-quality IT, in order to help fishermen in the lagging regions diversify from traditional fishing activities into other sectors of economic activity;

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0109.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0280.

5. Stresses the importance of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), which for the first time combines both Integrated Maritime Policy funding and fisheries funding, together with funding from the European Investment Bank (EIB), to support the sustainable and environmentally friendly development of fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing, to support revenue diversification in fishing communities dependent on those sectors, particularly small-scale coastal fisheries, to promote vocational training for women and young people, and to attract new entrepreneurs to the sector; calls on the Member States to speed up utilisation of the fund;
6. Stresses that fishermen in many lagging regions experience difficulties in accessing finance owing to the debt burden and pressures on public finances in those areas; calls on the Commission, therefore, to work with national and regional authorities to develop adequate financial instruments tailored to the needs of fishermen and their enterprises;
7. Emphasises the importance of developing and promoting sustainable aquaculture; highlights, moreover, not only its potential as an economic activity providing well-paying, stable jobs (it already accounts for 80 000 jobs in the EU), but also its importance for reducing the overfishing of European fish stocks and the EU's dependence on imports of fish and seafood from third countries.