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DRAFT REPORT

on the state of play of recreational fisheries in the European Union
(2017/2120(INI))

Committee on Fisheries

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the state of play of recreational fisheries in the European Union (2017/2120(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Article 43 thereof,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC¹,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006²,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council³, in particular Article 77 thereof,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008⁴, in particular Article 5 thereof,
 - having regard to the research study entitled ‘Marine recreational and semi-subsistence fishing – its value and its impact on fish stocks’, published by its Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies in July 2017,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A8-0000/2017),
- A. whereas the definition provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) in 2013 describes recreational fisheries as ‘the capture or attempted capture

¹ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

² OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

³ OJ L 149, 20.5.2014, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 157, 20.6.2017, p. 1.

of living aquatic resources mainly for leisure and/or personal consumption. This covers active fishing methods including line, spear, and hand-gathering and passive fishing methods including nets, traps pots, and set-lines'; whereas this definition should be corroborated by Article 55(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, which states that 'the marketing of catches from recreational fisheries shall be prohibited';

- B. whereas it is important to understand the difference between recreational fisheries and semi-subsistence fishing, because the two should be evaluated and regulated separately;
- C. whereas without a clear legal distinction between recreational fisheries and semi-subsistence fishing, certain illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing may go undetected by falling under those two categories;
- D. whereas in order to properly manage any type of fishing activity, including recreational fisheries, reliable data collection and time series are required in order to assess the impact on fish stocks and on the environment;
- E. whereas the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) provides financial support for data collection, including for recreational fisheries;
- F. whereas the objectives listed in Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 refer to the need to achieve economic, social and employment benefits, and to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield;
- G. whereas in order to achieve the objectives of the common fisheries policy (CFP), fish stocks and fishing activity should be managed and balanced; whereas these objectives cannot be achieved if part of the data on catches and on the economic importance of fishing activities, including recreational fisheries, is missing;
- H. whereas the Member States are under the obligation to collect data, including estimates of the number of recreational catches and releases of species listed under Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 and eventually included in multiannual management plans;
- I. whereas although a wide range of species are caught through marine recreational fishing, mandatory data collection applies to just a few species, and a more country-specific multispecies survey and analysis is therefore required; whereas recreational fisheries catches should be included in the total fishing mortality and biomass estimates;
- J. whereas the availability of data on recreational fisheries varies from region to region, with better information available about marine recreational fisheries in the North and Baltic Seas, than in the Mediterranean and Black Seas;
- K. whereas the estimated number of marine recreational fishermen in the EU stands at between 8.7 and 9 million people, or 1.6 % of the European population, who fish for an estimated 77 million days each year;
- L. whereas the estimated economic impact of marine recreational fisheries is EUR 10.5 billion, comprising EUR 5.1 billion direct, EUR 2.3 billion indirect and EUR 3.2 billion induced expenditure;

- M. whereas marine recreational fisheries supports an estimated 100 000 full-time equivalent jobs in the EU, comprising 57 000 direct, 18 000 indirect and 24 000 induced jobs, and generating an average economic value of EUR 49 000 per year per full-time equivalent job (including Norway);
- N. whereas the estimated percentage contribution to total catches by maritime recreational fisheries ranges widely, depending on the targeted species – from 1.8 % for mackerel to 72 % for the European eel;
- O. whereas the evaluation of the impact of recreational fisheries on fish stocks includes the retention of catches and the mortality rates of released fish; whereas the survival rate of fish caught by rod and line (catch and release fishing), is higher than equivalent rates for fish caught with other gear and by other practices and should thus be taken into consideration;
- P. whereas owing to the poor state of Northern sea bass and Western Baltic cod stocks, recreational fisheries have been included in recovery plans, by setting bag limits, in order to help recover these stocks;
- Q. whereas recreational fishermen are targeting diadromous species such as salmon, trout and eel; whereas data collection on these species should be carried out in both freshwater and saltwater in order to evaluate how fish stocks change over time;
- R. whereas the UK's withdrawal from the Union should be taken into consideration for the future management of maritime recreational fisheries, in view of the importance of this activity in the UK and its significance for shared fish stocks;
1. Stresses the vital importance of data collection on recreational fisheries, and on maritime recreational fisheries in particular, in order to properly evaluate its impact and significance;
 2. Urges the Commission to propose the necessary measures in order to expand data collection for recreational fisheries to encompass more fish stocks and to make the collection of data on its socio-economic impact mandatory;
 3. Calls on the Member States to undertake the necessary technical steps to implement the current regulation on data collection and to expand it to include more stocks and aspects of recreational fisheries;
 4. Calls on the Commission to ensure that all the necessary data on recreational fisheries are collected in order to provide a complete evaluation of fish stocks; cautions that without such a comprehensive evaluation, the multiannual plans might not achieve the objectives of the CFP;
 5. Underlines the fact that data collection is an obligation of the Member States; points out, however, that without a proper definition of recreational fisheries and without the obligation to collect data for all recreational fisheries catches, there will always be a lack of data or uncertainty in stock assessment;
 6. Urges the Commission to support the development of recreational fishing in the tourism

sector, as an important contributor to the development of the blue economy in small communities and coastal communities; considers that doing so would have a positive impact on efforts to prolong the tourism season beyond the summer months;

7. Calls on the Commission to propose a comprehensive regulation on maritime recreational fisheries, as well as a definition for the activity at EU level, to be included in the future CFP, so that both types of maritime fishing – commercial and recreational – can be managed in a balanced, fair and sustainable manner with a view to achieving the desired objectives;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Recreational fishing is a hobby, but the economic, social and environmental importance of this activity, are factors that show how important this activity is and should thus be taken into consideration and analysed when considering future regulations.

At the EU level, the estimation is that there are between 8.7 and 9 million recreational fisherman, representing 1.6% of the European population, and this might be an underestimation of the actual numbers, as this does not include freshwater fishing. These people are fishing for an estimated 77 million days, bringing an estimated 10.5 billion euros to the economies, with a large portion of this money being brought to small communities or regions which are considered to be lagging. In the perspective of our blue economy development strategy, the financial and regulatory support for touristic recreational fishery is going to help these communities in diversifying their income and their economies.

At the same time, as we already know, the data available and the data collection in the recreational fisheries sector is lacking or is not available at all in some cases. This problem has been made very clear in the discussion with the Commission and other stakeholders, as well as in the research report presented by the Policy Department, who repeatedly underlined this issues throughout their findings. And it's not just a problem of data regarding the catches, it is also a lack of data regarding the economic importance of this sector, the environmental impact and all other aspects. The lack of data makes it very hard to do a proper evaluation on recreational fisheries from any perspective.

It is true there is some data collected by Member States in the case of some species, like Atlantic cod, European sea bass, European eel and Atlantic salmon. This data is being collected because under the Data Collection Framework, Member States, are requested to do so. But this is not enough for our stocks and these cannot be extrapolated to other species targeted, and cannot be the scientific basis for good regulation. We should request the Commission and the Member States to collect more data and to adopt the necessary regulation in order to ensure a good level of data throughout the EU and in all our Sea basins.

Without this data we cannot estimate exactly what is the impact of recreational fisheries, and mainly the maritime recreational fisheries, on our stocks. We need to have a more complete assessment of our stocks, which is not the case when the stock is being shared between recreational fisheries and commercial fishing. If we want to properly manage our marine resources and accomplish the CFP objectives, we need to know the whole picture regarding catches and fish mortality. We have seen that in the case of the sea bass the importance of maritime recreational fisheries were evaluated as being big and recreational fisheries were included in the recovery plan by setting bag limits. But this was not done on the bases of analysing complete data, it was based on the extrapolation of the available one, and it did not include an analysis of the economic importance of this sector. Without these information, the management plans and the regulation adopted are not going to be proportional and fair to the two fishing sectors targeting the same stock - commercial and recreational.

It is also very important to have a fair definition of recreational fisheries because without one it is going to be difficult to understand which data Member States must collect. This definition should make a clear difference between recreational fisheries and semi-substance fishing. This

difference is important if we want to avoid IUU fishing hiding under recreational fisheries. In this sense, I supported and proposed in this report the definition given by ICES, which, in my opinion, is covering recreational fisheries and all its' aspects. This definition should also cover sports fishing, which, in the ICES text is not clearly enough and could leave room for interpretation. Sports fishing should be understood differently and should be allowed to sell or give the catches for charity programs.

In the perspective of Brexit, it is very important to take into consideration the interests of recreational fisherman. The interest showed by recreational fisherman who travel for this hobby should be considered when establishing future regulations, so that they can have easy, fair and legal access to fishing sites and stocks.

We need to find the right way of including recreational fisheries in the next CFP. I support the inclusion of it in future management plans, but only after a complete evaluation based on reliable full data, as it is the case for commercial fishing, because all management plans should be based on the same principle - best available scientific advice.