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1. The scope of the quality of life issue in the EU maritime policy

With regard to maritime policy, quality of life is an issue which should not be underestimated. It has a very broad scope. It concerns coastal zone citizens' working conditions as well as consumption of a range of products and services; natural assets are an essential component of their life. As such, quality of life is critical for the EU maritime policy. It depends on a range of appropriate management measures, including coastal zone management, access to transport, land use, sustainable use of marine resources, and management of coastal tourism flows. In turn, such measures are largely conditioned by national and international policy options, including waterborne transport, railways, road transport, or the Common Fisheries Policy. In other terms, quality of life involves the maritime economy as a whole, at local, national and European scales.

The complexity of the quality of life issue resides in the double nature of coastal zones. On the one hand, coastal zones are pivotal for international trade, for ports, shipping and logistics, and are strategic nodes between waterborne and hinterland transport. They receive and emit considerable flows of goods, passengers and tourists. For such functions, more and more space is required: increasing tourism flows require space for housing, leisure facilities, including marinas, etc.; ship size, especially for cruise and container ships, is increasing and requires larger port terminals; energy supply facilities (gas terminals, electricity generation plants, offshore and onshore wind farms) have also increasing space requirements. On the other hand, coastal zones are fragile, as hosting traditional activities such as fisheries, fish farming and leisure, the existence of which critically depends on a sustainable management of natural assets and marine ecosystems.

2. Need for economic and social knowledge on maritime activities

A consequence of the increasing pressure on coastal zones resources and space is the cross-implications of policy making options, even when they concern specific branches: port facility extension may impact natural assets or resources, thereby a range of coastal activities; conversely, protection may limit the development of competitive industries. Land price increase, as an inevitable consequence of competition for space, has implications both on the development of, and employment in, marine and coastal activities, and on local citizens' quality of life. In other terms, maritime policy measures impact the economic and social situation of coastal zones, including employment and quality of life, and thereby influence national economies.

This is the reason why, in order to assess its potential costs and benefits, the EU maritime policy needs to rest on a better knowledge of maritime activities, especially in terms of economy and employment.

As regards maritime economic and social information, the state of the art in Europe is patchy, absent a concept of "maritime activities" in national accounts. For some industries, economic and employment data are released on a regular basis either by administrations or by industries

themselves; quality and reliability are variable. Regional data may exist for specific maritime branches. National data are seldom issued on a regular basis. All this does not permit to have a comprehensive and regularly updated picture of maritime activities in member states and coastal zones.

At European level, an assessment of maritime industries was published by the Marine Industry Forum. Recently DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs published a report on maritime-related employment. CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions), in its "Europe of the Sea" report, addressed the economy and employment topic, and examined trends in key maritime branches. These isolated attempts suggest the need for agreeing on a set of indicators to be followed on a regular basis and for harmonising their definition.

3. Need for information on maritime-related R&D

The complexity of the challenges coastal zones are confronted with, in terms of international competitiveness and innovation, of job creation, of stakeholders' demand for space, resources and monitoring, and of environment issues (ecosystem management, CO₂ emissions, climate change, sea level rise), makes it critical to inject more R&D into a wide range of maritime-related activities.

Here, the purpose is not to discuss EC and member states' support to R&D but to underscore the need for collecting more information about maritime-related R&D in terms of effort and achievements, particularly in regional "clusters": these regional groupings of enterprises, universities and other public bodies have an essential action at coastal zone and international scales and serve as examples of how effort can be organised locally. The CPMR report summarized some information prepared by a set of regional clusters; this example shows that a regular stocktaking of this kind, at EU level, could be useful to coastal stakeholders, industries and EU policy makers.

4. Conclusion

Maritime policy presently receives much attention in Europe, as an opportunity to combine competitiveness and coastal zones' quality of life objectives. But it faces many challenges as a result of an increasing pressure on coastal resources and space. To overcome them, improving knowledge on maritime activities, their performance and their links with R&D is required. A helpful option would be to put in place a European observatory which would update information on the maritime economy, employment and R&D fields.