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REPORT

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

Committee on Fisheries

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CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	11
INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE	13
FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE.....	14

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 its resolution of 6 July 2017 on promoting cohesion and development in the outermost regions of the EU: implementation of Article 349 of the TFEU¹,
- 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/EC²,
- 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 1966/2006³,
- 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 Council⁴, 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 199/2008⁵, 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,

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0316.

² OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

³ OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 149, 20.5.2014, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 157, 20.6.2017, p. 1.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A8-0191/2018),
- 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 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 clear definitions of recreational fisheries and marine recreational fisheries are needed, taking into account 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 and it should be made clear that recreational fishing is not semi-subsistence fishing; whereas the Regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy makes no reference to the latter; whereas the two should accordingly be evaluated and regulated separately;
- C. whereas the EU legislation only operates with a two-tier fisheries categories system, covering recreational and commercial fisheries, and thus does not recognise semi-subsistence fishing and semi-commercial fishing;
- D. whereas recreational fishing, given its magnitude, can have a significant impact on fish stocks, but regulation of the issue falls primarily within the competence of the Member States;
- E. whereas the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has defined subsistence fishing as ‘fishing for aquatic animals that contribute substantially to meeting an individual’s nutritional needs’;
- F. whereas without a clear legal distinction between recreational fisheries, semi-subsistence and semi-commercial fishing, certain illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing may go undetected by not being counted or properly regulated;
- G. whereas there is no single agreed, clear definition of recreational fishing at EU level, and whereas this makes it very difficult to control recreational fishing, collect data on it and assess its impact on fish stocks and the environment or its economic importance;
- H. whereas, in order to properly manage any type of fishing activity, including recreational fisheries, regular and robust data collection and time series are required in order to assess the impact on fish stocks or other marine organisms and on the environment; whereas at present such data are missing or incomplete; whereas, in addition to the direct impact on fish stocks, the further environmental impact of recreational fisheries has also been insufficiently studied;
- I. whereas studies have demonstrated that a substantial amount of traceable plastic debris in seas, lakes and rivers has originated from water-based recreational activities such as boating, tourism and fishing; notes that litter in the form of lost recreational fishing gear can cause serious habitat degradation and ecological damage;

- J. whereas the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) provides financial support for data collection, including for recreational fisheries;
- K. 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 and other marine organisms above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield;
- L. whereas, according to a recent study commissioned by Parliament, the impact of recreational fisheries may vary between fish stocks, representing 2-72 % of total catch;
- M. 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;
- N. whereas the Member States are under an 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; whereas, in this regard, only some Member States have comprehensive data on the recreational fishing practised in their territory;
- O. 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;
- P. 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 or the Atlantic;
- Q. whereas the estimated number of those practising marine recreational fishing in Europe 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;
- R. whereas, according to Article 3(2)(6) of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, ‘fisherman’ means any person engaging in commercial fishing activities, as recognised by the Member State, and whereas it is therefore necessary to find another definition to cover those engaged in recreational fishing activities, as referred to in recital A;
- S. whereas the estimated economic impact of European marine recreational fisheries (without the value of tourist fisheries) is EUR 10.5 billion, comprising EUR 5.1 billion of direct, EUR 2.3 billion of indirect and EUR 3.2 billion of induced expenditure; whereas, in the EU alone, the amount is estimated at EUR 8.4 billion (comprising EUR 4.2 billion in direct, EUR 1.8 billion in indirect and EUR 2.5 billion in induced expenditure);
- T. whereas there is a direct link between fish stock abundance/structure, access to fishing opportunities and the resulting employment and economic and socioeconomic impacts

that it delivers; whereas it is important to evaluate the impact of all fisheries on a specific stock, as well as its economic value, in order to adopt management measures that help achieve both the environmental objective and the economic ones;

- U. whereas marine recreational fisheries support an estimated 99 000 full-time equivalent jobs (FTEs) in Europe, 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 FTE; whereas, in the EU alone, the figure is estimated at 84 000 FTEs (50 000 direct, 15 000 indirect and 20 000 induced jobs);
- V. whereas recreational maritime tourism fishing, as well as other tourism fishing, is shown to be very important for the economy of many regions and countries, and should thus be analysed in order to better assess its value, impact and development potential;
- W. whereas all types of recreational fishing have a greater economic and social impact at local and regional level than at national level by supporting local and coastal communities through tourism, production, retail and renting of equipment and other recreational fishing related services;
- X. whereas, in some cases, recreational catches constitute a significant portion of the total fishing mortality of the stock, and therefore should be taken into account when setting fishing opportunities; whereas, according to a recent study commissioned by Parliament, the estimated percentage contribution to total catches by maritime recreational fisheries may vary widely, depending on the targeted species – from 1.8 % for mackerel to 13-72 % for the European eel;
- Y. whereas it is important to evaluate individually the different recreational fishing methods, or segments described in the ICES 2013 definition;
- Z. 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, in most instances, higher than equivalent rates for fish caught with other gear and by other practices and should be taken into consideration in these cases; whereas further information is needed on the main gear used in marine recreational fisheries so that a comparison can be made between the survival chances of discards in commercial fisheries and released fish in recreational fisheries;
- AA. whereas recreational fishing includes a variety of gears and techniques with different stock and environmental impact, and should thus be evaluated and regulated accordingly;
- AB. whereas, owing to the poor state of Northern sea bass and Western Baltic cod stocks, recreational fisheries restrictions have been introduced at EU level by setting bag limits or forbidding retention (sea bass), in order to help recover these stocks; whereas emergency management measures taken when it is thought that the status of a stock is being affected by recreational fishing do not provide the sector with the necessary visibility;

- AC. whereas certain 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;
- AD. whereas the areas that are most accessible to the majority of recreational fishermen are coastal areas where, in addition to species of fish, invertebrates and seaweed are often caught as well; whereas these play a key role in the ecology of such areas; whereas the impact of catches of these species will also need to be assessed, with regard not only to the stocks concerned but also the ecosystems of which they form a part;
- AE. whereas salmon return to their natal waters, and whereas ideally they should only be targeted in the river systems where efficient control and enforcement is possible; whereas targeting salmon at sea indiscriminately removes salmon from both healthy and vulnerable populations;
- AF. whereas recreational fishing could represent a significant source of fishing mortality, while the highest estimated environmental impact for fresh-water recreational fishing is associated with the possibility of introducing non-indigenous species in the ecosystem, with little such impact in maritime recreational fishing;
- AG. whereas the common fisheries policy was established to manage commercial fisheries, with no consideration given to recreational fisheries, its peculiarities and the need for specific management instruments and planning;
- AH. whereas the environmental impacts of recreational fishing include types other than fish removal, but the lack of clear data makes it difficult to separate them from other anthropogenic sources;
- AI. 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;
- AJ. whereas recreational fishing has many social and public health benefits, e.g. it increases participants' life quality, encourages interaction among young people and educates people with regard to the environment and the importance of its sustainability;
1. Stresses the importance of collecting sufficient data on recreational fisheries, and on maritime recreational fisheries in particular, in order to properly evaluate the total fishing mortality levels for all stocks;
 2. Underlines that recreational fishing trends are increasing in most European countries and that this type of fishing represents an important activity with societal, economic, employment and environmental effects, notably the significant impact that it can have on fish resources; highlights the fact that Member States should, therefore, ensure that such activities are conducted in a sustainable manner compatible with the objectives of the CFP;
 3. Highlights the need to protect the artisanal fleet and ensure its survival and generational replacement in the face of the expansion of recreational activity linked to recreational ports and seasonal tourism;

4. Considers that data should be collected on the number of recreational fishermen, the volume of their catches and the added value which they generate in coastal communities;
5. Calls on the Commission to include and improve the existing provisions for recreational fishing in the new control regulation;
6. Urges the Commission to evaluate and, if necessary, expand data collection for recreational fisheries in order to encompass more fish stocks and other marine organisms, to draw up a feasibility study on the uniform collection of data relating to its socio-economic impact and to make the collection of such data mandatory;
7. Emphasises the need for improved reporting and monitoring of catches connected with recreational fisheries; recalls that in the adoption of the EU budget for 2018 Parliament approved a pilot project aimed at introducing a monthly reporting scheme for sea bass catches, and urges the Commission and the Member States to fund further monitoring projects for the species that are the most vulnerable to recreational fishing; recalls the importance of traceability and calls on the Commission to include and improve the existing provisions for recreational fishing in the new control regulation;
8. Calls on the Commission to conduct an impact assessment on recreational fishing in the EU; considers that the assessment of the management plans which include recreational fishing provisions should also be embedded in the Commission's final report on the impact assessment;
9. 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;
10. Calls on the Commission to ensure that all the necessary data on recreational fisheries are regularly collected in order to provide a complete evaluation of fish stocks and other marine organisms in order to offer greater visibility to the sector; cautions that without such a comprehensive evaluation and appropriate actions taken on the basis of that evaluation, the fisheries management plans and technical measures might not achieve the objectives of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013, nor a balance between recreational and commercial fisheries;
11. Considers that, where recreational catches have a significant impact on the stock, they should be included as an integral part of the ecosystem and within the social and economic considerations of the multiannual management plans, for the purposes of both setting fishing opportunities and adopting relevant technical measures; calls, therefore, on the Commission, where necessary, to include recreational fishing in the multiannual management plans already adopted or about to be adopted;
12. Underlines the fact that data collection is an obligation of the Member States; points out, however, that a proper definition of recreational fisheries would improve the quality of the data; calls on the Commission to propose a uniform definition for recreational fishing at EU level that clearly differentiates recreational from commercial and semi-substance fisheries, based on the principle that recreational catches should never be sold;

13. Considers, on the basis of the data and the impact assessment report and taking into account Member States' competences on recreational fisheries, that the Commission should evaluate the role of recreational fisheries 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;
14. Urges the Commission to provide support, including financial support, for the development of recreational fishing in the tourism sector, as an important contributor to the development of the blue economy in small communities, coastal communities and islands, particularly in the outermost regions; considers that doing so would have a positive impact on efforts to prolong the tourism season beyond the summer months; suggests that the Commission designate recreational fishing as a theme of the EDEN sustainable tourism project year and launch projects to promote recreational fishing tourism in small coastal communities under the COSME Fund;
15. Points out that, outside the context of normal management of fishery resources based on substantive scientific data, the development of recreational fishing activities must not mean a reduction in professional fishing opportunities or a sharing of scarce resources between professional and recreational activities, especially in the case of small-scale and artisanal fishing;
16. Recognises that recreational fishing has been practised for centuries across the EU and is an integral part of the culture, traditions and heritage of a great many coastal and island communities; notes that the different types of recreational fishing are as diverse as the cultures of the EU itself and that recognition must be given to this fact in any attempt to legislate in this area;
17. Calls on the Commission to introduce appropriate measures in order to ensure that future provisions for the regulation of recreational fishing are appropriate and not detrimental to professional fishing activities;
18. Highlights the need to lay down basic rules for the management of recreational fishing and suggests that a catalogue of recreational fishing activities, which should include information about fishing gear and operations and a description of fishing areas, target species and by-catches, should also be drawn up;
19. Highlights the importance of the EMFF in helping to develop scientific capacity and guaranteeing full and reliable assessments of maritime resources for recreational fishing activities; recalls that the EMFF provides funds for data collection, and calls on the Commission to widen the future scope of the EMFF in order to provide financial support for research and analysis of the data collected;
20. Stresses the strong and crucial need to share the data and points out that the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund supports data-gathering, including with regard to recreational fisheries; calls, therefore, for the Member States to take the necessary steps to gather data and urges the Commission, in addition, to further develop a common database containing comprehensive and reliable data available to researchers to enable them to monitor and assess the state of fishery resources; suggests that such measures could include the use of EMFF funding.

21. 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.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	15.5.2018
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Alain Cadec, David Coburn, Linnéa Engström, João Ferreira, Sylvie Goddyn, Carlos Iturgaiz, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ní Riada, Ulrike Rodust, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jarosław Wałęsa
Substitutes present for the final vote	Norbert Erdős, Verónica Lope Fontagné
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Tim Aker, Nessa Childers

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

21	+
ALDE	António Marinho e Pinto, Norica Nicolai
ECR	Peter van Dalen, Ruža Tomašić
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn
GUE/NGL	João Ferreira, Liadh Ní Riada
PPE	Alain Cadec, Norbert Erdős, Carlos Iturgaiz, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Gabriel Mato, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Jarosław Wałęsa
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Nessa Childers, Ulrike Rodust, Ricardo Serrão Santos
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Linnéa Engström

2	-
EFDD	Tim Aker, David Coburn

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention