



2017/2208(INI)

31.1.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Regional Development

on lagging regions in the EU
(2017/2208(INI))

Rapporteur: Nicola Caputo

PA_NonLeg

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,
 - 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 TFEU³,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the new Common Fisheries Policy⁴,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products⁵,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 on the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)⁶,
- A. whereas fishing, particularly small-scale artisanal fishing, is a traditional activity which, through its specific character, defines identities and lifestyles in most coastal areas of the ‘low-growth regions’ (such as areas of the Italian Mezzogiorno, and of Greece, Croatia, Spain and Portugal) and ‘low-income regions’ (such as areas of Bulgaria and Romania) referred to in the relevant Commission report;
- B. whereas the livelihood of 12 % of the world’s population depends on fishing and aquaculture, meaning that trade in fish products can have an enormous social and economic impact, almost 40 % of production being traded internationally with an annual export value of over EUR 115 billion;
- C. whereas small-scale, artisanal, coastal and shellfish fishing are of economic, territorial, social and cultural importance in many of the EU’s coastal areas, including its islands and outermost regions, and this sector should therefore be protected and supported in the face of industrial and large-scale fishing and industrial aquaculture;
- D. whereas artisanal fishing uses gear and techniques that have less impact on the status of endangered stocks;
- E. whereas artisanal fishing has significant repercussions for the future of the Union’s less developed coastal and island communities; whereas it is necessary to foster young

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0109.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0280.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0316.

⁴ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

⁵ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 1.

⁶ OJ L 149, 20.5.2014, p. 1.

people's interest in joining the sector and to offer them high-quality training, including in artisanal and coastal fishing, with the aim of contributing to the development of areas that rely on fishing and encouraging the population to remain;

- F. whereas attaining maximum sustainable yield (MSY) requires applying a regional focus that takes account of scientific criteria and socio-economic considerations;
- G. whereas the EU is the world's largest market for fish products, making it all the more necessary to ensure that fisheries activities are not only profitable but also balanced and sustainable;
- H. whereas fishing has continued to decline, further contributing to the severe economic decline of many coastal and island areas, including those in the lagging regions, resulting in depopulation, with inhabitants leaving for areas offering better employment and education prospects;
- I. whereas the measures affecting these regions that are adopted as part of the common fisheries policy must be sustainable from the social and economic point of view so as to ensure that artisanal fishing remains viable; whereas the species fished in coastal fisheries are extremely valuable in socio-economic terms even though they account for only a small proportion of commercial fisheries;
- J. whereas Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 stipulates that 'when allocating the fishing opportunities available to them, ... Member States shall use transparent and objective criteria' and that 'the criteria to be used may include, inter alia, ... the contribution to the local economy'; whereas within this framework the EU must pay particular attention to the fleets of the less developed regions;
- K. whereas women play a vital role in artisanal fishing, particularly in tasks related to the processing chain and shellfish fishing;
- L. whereas the EU's cohesion policy aims to reduce the differences between regions and between Member States, fostering economic, social and territorial confluence, and having regard to the role played by the fishing sector and sectors directly or indirectly linked to it in the development of coastal regions;
- M. whereas the large number of jobs, both direct and indirect, that are generated in the fishing, shellfishing and aquaculture sectors and ancillary industries, as well as the fish marketing and processing industries, gives them a high degree of socio-economic importance;
- N. 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;
- O. 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;
- P. whereas Article 349 of the TFEU recognises the special economic and social situation

of the outermost regions (ORs), which is compounded by structural factors (remoteness, insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate, dependence on a few products, etc.) the permanence and combination of which severely restrain their development;

- Q. whereas a large percentage of local populations in the less developed regions, particularly in the ORs, rely on activities linked to small-scale coastal and local fishing, and there is a shortage of young people in this type of activity because it is unattractive, low-skilled and often badly paid;
 - R. whereas one way of guaranteeing that fishery products from the ORs are competitive is to ensure that the price of fish from those regions is not inflated as a result of transport costs when it reaches the main destination markets;
 - S. whereas recreational fishing and the tourism linked to this activity have an important economic impact and could bring economic diversification to these regions;
 - T. whereas the EU's blue economy strategy encourages and supports sustainable economic development in coastal areas;
 - U. whereas maritime and coastal tourism provides jobs for 3.2 million people and generates a total of EUR 183 billion in gross value added in the EU;
1. Stresses the importance of fishing, in particular small-scale fishing, and sustainable coastal and maritime tourism for the development of an all-inclusive social and eco-friendly maritime economy; emphasises the importance of diversifying the range of tourism on offer by boosting economically and environmentally sustainable activities that facilitate and promote access to the maritime heritage, undersea tourism, gastro-tourism and water sports throughout the year, with the aim of offsetting seasonality; considers it necessary to provide greater financial support for SMEs that are developing innovative solutions for coastal and maritime tourism, through financial instruments such as Horizon 2020;
 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, including new forms of sector-related tourism, such as fishery tourism; encourages the Commission and the Member States to support the use of different EU funds alongside the EMFF in order to develop fishery tourism and fish processing in these areas and thus diversify income sources; stresses, however, that such diversification must in no way endanger actual fishing activities and that the work of small-scale fishermen must receive recognition and financial support, even during biological rest periods;
 3. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to invest in training and in the technological development of all fisheries sectors in order to attract high-quality human resources in the lagging regions and ensure that they remain there; points out that investment in human capital and action to promote training in the fisheries sector are essential preconditions in order to achieve sustainable and competitive growth; highlights the role that the ESF can play in improving education and training, including in artisanal and coastal fishing; stresses the importance of the establishment and

performance of Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs), which provide assistance to the fisheries sector;

4. Calls on the Member States and local and regional authorities to provide sustainable innovative infrastructure, including for example fast internet connections and good-quality IT, in order to help fishermen in the lagging regions diversify from traditional fishing activities, improving the activity carried out and making their activity more compatible with the other sectors of economic activity, particularly complementary sectors; highlights the potential of multi-sector projects that promote economic, social and territorial development in the least developed coastal regions by capitalising on synergies between European funds, in particular the ERDF, the EMFF and the ESF; stresses the importance of the blue economy, which can contribute to the economic growth of lagging coastal and island areas;
5. Emphasises the need to support the work and creation of producer and interprofessional organisations with the aim of improving the sector's competitiveness and positioning in the market;
6. 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, as well as of the EIB, in terms of supporting the sustainable and environment-friendly development of fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing, supporting revenue diversification in fishing communities dependent on those sectors, particularly small-scale coastal fisheries, promoting vocational training for women and young people, and attracting new entrepreneurs to the sector; calls on the Member States to speed up utilisation of the EMFF, and in particular of its components that are geared to vocational training and skills for local populations and the development of complementary activities to traditional fishing; considers it crucial for support for the transport of fish from the ORs, up until it reaches the international market, to be maintained and preferably increased so as to guarantee fair competition with products from other locations; highlights the importance of providing the EMFF with sufficient financing in the post-2020 period for it to continue supporting the coastal development of regions that rely on fishing;
7. Stresses that fishermen, in particular small-scale fishermen, in many lagging regions experience difficulties in accessing finance owing to the debt burden and pressures on public finances in those areas, as well as bureaucratic and administrative delays hampering the operation of the EMFF; calls on the Commission, therefore, to work with national, regional and local authorities in order to develop adequate financial instruments tailored to the needs of fishermen and their enterprises; encourages the Commission and the Member States to implement a simplified and faster procedure for using the EMFF for the lagging regions; calls on the Commission to look into the possibility of establishing an instrument dedicated to supporting fisheries in the ORs, along the lines of the measures carried out for agriculture in the outermost regions under the POSEI scheme, that would contribute to deriving maximum benefit from the fisheries potential of those regions;
8. Calls for the full application of Article 349 TFEU in the EU's policies, regulations, funds and programmes relating to fisheries, and particularly in the EMFF, in order to

respond to the specific difficulties encountered by the ORs;

9. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to support the use of different EU funds, together with the EMFF, in order to develop fishery tourism and fish processing in the regions concerned and thus diversify their income sources;
10. Calls on the Commission, in order to allow the survival of the fisheries sector in the ORs and in compliance with the principles of differential treatment for small islands and territories mentioned in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, to introduce supporting measures based on Article 349 of the TFEU in order to allow the funding (at EU or national level) of the ORs' artisanal and traditional fishing vessels which land all their catches in ports in the ORs and contribute to local sustainable development, so as to increase human safety, comply with European hygiene standards, fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and achieve greater environmental efficiency;
11. Supports the Member States in establishing a preferential fiscal regime for the regions concerned, in order to encourage investment and combat poverty;
12. Emphasises the importance of developing and promoting sustainable aquaculture, in environmental terms and in order to protect the health of fish stocks and of consumers; 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 both the overfishing of European fish stocks and the EU's dependence on imports of fish and seafood from third countries; encourages Member States and local authorities to support blue economy projects in order to help people in the lagging regions develop environmentally sustainable income sources; calls on the Commission and the Member States to focus more efforts on resolving issues of administrative burden affecting the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	24.1.2018
Result of final vote	+: 22 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Alain Cadec, Richard Corbett, Linnéa Engström, João Ferreira, Sylvie Goddyn, Mike Hookem, Ian Hudghton, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, António Marinho e Pinto, Norica Nicolai, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jarosław Wałęsa
Substitutes present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Ole Christensen, Norbert Erdős, Seán Kelly, Verónica Lope Fontagné
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Tim Aker, João Pimenta Lopes

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

22	+
ALDE	António Marinho e Pinto, Norica Nicolai
ECR	Peter van Dalen, Remo Sernagiotto, Ruža Tomašić
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn
GUE/NGL	João Ferreira, João Pimenta Lopes
PPE	Alain Cadec, Norbert Erdős, Carlos Iturgaiz, Seán Kelly, Werner Kuhn, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Jarosław Wałęsa
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Richard Corbett, Ulrike Rodust, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas
VERTS/ALE	Linnéa Engström, Ian Hudghton

2	-
EFDD	Tim Aker, Mike Hookem

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention