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DRAFT REPORT

on the small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives
(2021/2056(INI))

Committee on Fisheries

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives (2021/2056(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission maritime economic paper No 8/2020 of 9 March 2021 entitled ‘The EU fishing fleet 2020: Trends and economic results’,
 - having regard to the publication of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) of 20 August 2019 entitled ‘The 2019 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet’,
 - having regard to recital four of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy¹ (CFP), which states that the CFP should contribute to ‘a fair standard of living for the fisheries sector including small-scale fisheries’,
 - having regard to target 14b of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for access to marine resources and markets for small-scale artisanal fishers,
 - having regard to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication,
 - having regard to the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture for 2022, as proclaimed by the UN,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A9-0000/2021),
- A. whereas in 2018 the EU Member States’ small-scale fisheries sector consisted in a fleet of 44702 vessels, accounting for 76% of the EU’s active fishing ships and 50% of its crew but only 8% of gross tonnage and 5% of landings, employing 67 760 fishers;
- B. whereas due account needs to be taken of the marked differences between fleets, fleet segments, target species, fishing gear, productivity, consumption preferences and the amount of fish consumed per inhabitant in the various EU Member States;
- C. whereas, in 2019, 64.9% of the vessels in the EU-28’s fishing fleet were 25 or more years old, for an average fleet age of 29.9 years, or 32.5 for the small-scale fishing fleet;
- D. whereas the fishing sector plays a key role in supplying fish to the public and keeping food balances in equilibrium in the Member States and the EU;

¹ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

- E. whereas, therefore, the centralisation of fisheries management advocated by the common fisheries policy (CFP) and the resulting loss of Member State sovereignty has hindered the necessary local management that is essential for ensuring the sector's socio-economic viability;
- F. whereas the fisheries sector and small-scale fishing make an important contribution towards socio-economic well-being, employment and the promotion of economic and social cohesion in various coastal regions and Member States;
- G. whereas issues concerning safety and accidents in fishing cannot be removed from those concerning fishing efforts and fish yield;
- H. whereas safety-related issues cannot be viewed separately from the characteristics of fishing fleets in the Member States;
- I. whereas small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries are potentially less damaging to fish stocks and more sustainable, both in terms of the biological management of resources and from a socio-economic point of view, and therefore warrant particular attention and support;
- J. whereas small-scale fishing also consumes far less energy (and has less impact) than large-scale fishing and is thus more environmentally sustainable;
- K. whereas, despite small-scale fishing's importance in the EU, it accounts for a substantially smaller share of the sector's total income than large-scale and distant-water fishing
- L. whereas many of the causes of the worsening socio-economic situation in the sector have still to be addressed, including the undervaluing and inadequate pricing of fish at first sale;
- M. whereas earnings are very unequally distributed between industrial fisheries on the one hand, which tend to take a more destructive approach to resources, and small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries on the other;
- N. whereas the lack of income- and wage-security for fishing professionals is particularly acute in small-scale fishing
- O. whereas earnings from small-scale fisheries are considerably depressed by operating costs;
- P. whereas greater investment is needed in research into and understanding of the state of resources;

Promoting higher fisheries incomes

1. Takes the view that the future of small-scale, coastal and artisanal fishing depends on immediate, meaningful and effective measures to increase fishing incomes, empower the fleet, to enhance the profession's attractiveness and provide training for young people and to improve operating conditions; calls on the Commission, therefore,

working in close cooperation with the Member States, to establish and implement support mechanisms for small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries that make it possible to tackle the specific problems in this part of the sector;

2. Affirms the need to strengthen the sector's value chain and promote marketing strategies, fostering mechanisms that improve the first-sale price, so as to benefit fishers;
3. Calls, with a view to distributing added value more fairly and properly along the sector's value chain, for consideration to be given to forms of intervention along the lines of guarantee prices or maximum profit rates in order to achieve the above aim and improve fishers' incomes;
4. Takes the view that measures are needed to defend or create markets of origin, thereby advocating short sales channels for traditional products and promoting and defending the particular quality of fish from small-scale fishing;
5. Calls for small-scale fishing support programmes to be introduced with a view to driving down production costs and ensuring economic sustainability;
6. Warns of the difficulties that the fisheries sector is still experiencing, which have now been aggravated by rising fuel prices;

Improving operating conditions and guaranteeing the future of small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries

7. Takes the view that the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) should make it possible to provide specific support for small-scale fishing in the form of fuel subsidies;
8. Urges the Commission to allow, under the aegis of EMFAF, support to be provided once again for storage, freezing and refrigeration, as a decisive element enabling full advantage to be taken of fisheries resources – without destroying or depleting stocks – and ensuring a regular supply to the public and the food processing industry;
9. Takes the view that the EMFAF should lend support to small-scale fishing as a priority, with a view to ensuring the sustainability and future viability of the countless coastal communities that are traditionally dependent on fishing
10. Considers that support under the EMFAF should be marshalled to address market failures, thereby contributing to increased incomes from fishing, promoting jobs with rights in the sector and ensuring fair prices for producers;
11. Stresses that, with a view to improving the execution rate of EMFAF financing and ensuring this part of the sector has access to support, it is necessary to: (1) look into and implement measures to streamline procedures, thus reducing the red tape surrounding applications; (2) amend the funding process for receiving aid and replace it with a system of pre-financing; raise the fund's financing limits;

12. Warns of the high average age of the fleet in small-scale fishing, which means a programme to renew and update the small-scale fleet is needed with a view to improving safety and on-board living conditions, improving energy efficiency and environmental sustainability, while ensuring the social and economic sustainability of the fishing communities that depend on the fleet;
13. Reiterates that the renewal of the fleet cannot be confused with expanding it or increasing fishing capacity;
14. Takes the view that ignoring the need for fleet renewal, particularly of obsolete and inefficient vessels, would jeopardise the future of small-scale fishing;
15. Considers, therefore, that EMFAF must provide funding opportunities for the renewal, upgrading or even resizing of the small-scale coastal and artisanal fleet;
16. Urges the Member States to ensure that the best safety, labour and living standards are in place on board fishing vessels;
17. Urges Member States to invest in works for the dredging, construction or upgrading of ports and harbours, thus ensuring that catches can be landed and unloaded in conditions of safety;
18. Stresses the importance of the fisheries sector in the socio-economic situation, employment and promotion of economic and social cohesion in the outermost regions (ORs), areas that are characterised by economies with permanent structural constraints and few opportunities for economic diversification;
19. Believes it essential, therefore, to maintain and step up EU support for the fisheries sector in those regions;
20. Considers that the future of small-scale fishing requires that states and public policymakers take a more active role, contrary to the logic that the market and ever-greater concentration in the sector must prevail;
21. Takes the view that the objectives of a fisheries policy should include guaranteeing the supply of fish to the public – as part of ensuring food security and sovereignty – developing coastal communities, and promoting fisheries-related professions and recognising the social role they play in providing jobs and improving the living conditions of fishers;
22. Reiterates that the reality of fisheries in the EU is complex and varies widely from Member State to Member State, and reaffirms that this great diversity requires management at local level;
23. Proposes that the EMFAF could support the establishment of a wage compensation fund that makes up for all lost earnings and covers non-fishing periods and that such periods be treated as actual working time for the purposes of the retirement pension and other social security entitlements;
24. Believes that if we wish to see generational renewal there must be attractive conditions

for young people, which means increasing fisheries incomes and ensuring training under conditions that pay due account to the diverse fishing practices, fishing gear and needs of each Member State;

25. Calls for the financial and technical resources for fisheries research in each Member State to be increased with a view to developing activities targeted at fisheries and fishery resources, stepping up and improving data collection and the assessment of the state of resources.
26. Takes the view, however, that the necessary setting of environmental objectives must go hand in hand with defining social and economic objectives, which are crucial for any fisheries policy;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries play a key role in the EU. Although accounting for some 76% of active vessels and 50% of crew in the EU fleet as a whole, small-scale fishing nevertheless represents only 8% of gross tonnage and around 5% of landings. The fleet in this sector is ageing, with an average age of 32.5 years, and meaningful action is needed to renew and modernise the fleet. The aging of the sector is also evident among crews, so in many situations we are starting to see a labour force shortage, which is a function of the profession's unattractiveness to younger people, either as a result of the arduous nature of work, operating conditions or low income. Finding a solution to these issues will be a determining factor in ensuring the profession's attractiveness to young people and guaranteeing the future of fishing.

The rapporteur believes that small-scale fishing is of strategic importance for the supply of fish and for ensuring the food security and sovereignty of various Member States. It also plays a major role in the socio-economic advancement of coastal communities, local development, employment, in maintaining and creating upstream and downstream economic activities, and preserving local cultural traditions. Small-scale fisheries thus have an importance that far outstrips their value in terms of percentage of gross domestic product.

It is a well-known fact that small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries are potentially less harmful to fish stocks and more selective. Small-scale fishing, meanwhile, also consumes far less energy (and has less impact) than large-scale fishing. It has also been found that small-scale, artisanal and coastal fishing potentially provides a higher gross value added per quantity for some species, for reasons linked to the better quality of the fish caught. The rapporteur is therefore of the view that this sector is more sustainable both in terms of the biological management of resources and the environment and from a socio-economic point of view, and thus warrants particular attention and support.

Despite these considerations and the importance of small-scale fishing in the Member States as a whole, earnings are very unequally distributed between this sector and industrial fisheries, which tend to take a more destructive approach to resources. The reality is that for fishing professionals, insecurity and low incomes and wages are rife, particularly in small-scale fishing owing to the high production costs and the discrepancy between first-sale prices and retail prices. These factors, that remain unaddressed, are exacerbating the socio-economic situation in the sector.

The rapporteur believes that the future of small-scale, coastal and artisanal fishing depends on immediate, meaningful and effective measures, enabling the specific problems affecting this part of the sector to be addressed, and thus to increase fishing incomes, empower the fleet, enhance the profession's attractiveness and provide training for young people and improve operating conditions.

The rapporteur advocates, among other measures and via EMFAF in particular:

- strengthening the value chain and promoting marketing strategies, fostering mechanisms that improve the first sale price, so as to benefit fishers;
- introducing forms of intervention along the lines of guarantee prices or maximum profit

rates, with a view to achieving a fairer and more appropriate distribution of added value across the sector's value chain and, thereby, increasing fishers' income;

- defending or creating markets of origin, thus advocating short sales channels for traditional products;
- establishing small-scale fishing support programmes with a view to driving down production costs and ensuring economic sustainability;
- intervening to ensure fairer production costs, enabling specific support to be provided for small-scale fishing in the form of fuel subsidies;
- re-enabling support to be provided for storage, freezing and refrigeration so the sector may take full advantage of fisheries resources – without destroying or depleting stocks – and provide a regular supply to the public and the food processing industry;
- establishing a wage compensation fund that makes up for all lost earnings and covers non-fishing periods and treats such periods as actual working time for the purposes of the retirement pension and other social security entitlements;

The EMFAF should support small-scale fishing as a priority, with a view to guaranteeing the sustainability and future viability of the countless coastal communities traditionally dependent on fishing, improving fishing incomes, promoting employment with rights in the sector and ensuring fair production prices.

If we wish to improve the EMFAF's execution rate we should look into and take measures such as:

- streamlining procedures, thus reducing the red tape surrounding applications;
- amending the funding process for receiving aid and replacing it with a system of pre-financing;
- raising the fund's financing limits;
- establishing a programme for the renewal, upgrading, modernisation or even resizing of the small-scale fleet, given the high average age of ships in this sector, with a view to improving safety and living conditions on board the vessels, improving their energy efficiency, and environmental sustainability while simultaneously ensuring the social and economic sustainability of the fishing communities that depend on them.

The rapporteur believes it unwise to conflate the possibility of intervening in the fleet, whether through fleet renewal, upgrading or modernisation measures, or through measures related to replacing engines, with increasing its fishing capacity. These measures, duly framed, may not be in and of themselves ways of increasing the fishing effort, but may represent a determining factor in increasing safety on board, in fishing operations and in entering and exiting ports and harbours, as well in maximising efficiency of operations, thus enabling reductions in production costs.

Safety issues should continue to be afforded high priority and measures should be taken to

ensure that the best safety, labour and living standards are in place on board fishing vessels. But on board safety cannot be limited to the vessel alone.

It must also encompass operating conditions, The necessary investment must also be ensured in works for the dredging, construction or upgrading of ports and harbours, thus ensuring safe conditions for fishing operations, unloading and landing fish, and for docking in ports.

The rapporteur also stresses the key role played by the fisheries sector in the socio-economic situation, employment, and in promoting economic and social cohesion in the outermost regions, and the need to maintain and increase support in those regions, an aim that could be achieved not only by re-establishing a POSEI scheme for fisheries but also by establishing a POSEI scheme for transport geared towards setting up and operating particular trade routes.

The rapporteur further considers it necessary to increase the financial and technical resources for fisheries research in each Member State with a view to developing activities targeted at fisheries and fishery resources, stepping up and improving data collection and the assessment of the state of resources.

However, the necessary setting of environmental objectives must go hand in hand with defining social and economic objectives, which are crucial for any fisheries policy.

In the fisheries sector in general, and in small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries in particular, there are marked differences from Member State to Member State between fleets, fleet segments, target species, fishing gear, productivity, consumption preferences and fish consumed per inhabitant. The centralisation of fisheries management promoted by the common fisheries policy and the resulting loss of Member State sovereignty have made it difficult to introduce the management at local level so sorely needed. The rapporteur is of the opinion that the future of small-scale fishing requires that states and public policymakers take a more active role, contrary to the logic that the market and ever-greater concentration in the sector must prevail. This will require management at local level and the setting of objectives for a fisheries policy that must include guaranteeing the supply of fish to the public – as part of ensuring food security and sovereignty – developing coastal communities, and promoting fisheries-related professions and recognising the social role they play in providing jobs and improving the living conditions of fishers and the socio-economic viability of the sector.