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Blue growth - enhancing sustainable growth in the marine, maritime transport and tourism sectors

European Parliament resolution of 2 July 2013 on Blue Growth: Enhancing sustainable growth in the EU's marine, maritime transport and tourism sectors (2012/2297(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 13 September 2012 on ‘Blue Growth – opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth’ (COM(2012)0494),
- having regard to the Commission report of 11 September 2012 on ‘Progress of the EU’s Integrated Maritime Policy’ (COM(2012)0491) and the accompanying Commission staff working document (SWD(2012)0255),
- having regard to the Limassol Declaration of 8 October 2012 on a Marine and Maritime Agenda for growth and jobs,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), which entered into force on 16 November 1994,
- having regard to the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for marine spatial planning and integrated coastal management (COM(2013)0133),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 31 October 2012 entitled ‘Overview of EU policies, legislation and initiatives related to marine litter’ (SWD(2012)0365),
- having regard to the Commission Green Paper of 29 August 2012 entitled ‘Marine Knowledge 2020 – from seabed mapping to ocean forecasting’ (COM(2012)0473),
- having regard to the Commission White Paper of 28 March 2011 entitled ‘Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource-efficient transport system’ (COM(2011)0144),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 June 2010 entitled ‘Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe’ (COM(2010)0352),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 January 2009 entitled ‘Communication and action plan with a view to establishing a European maritime transport space without barriers’ (COM(2009)0010),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 October 2007 entitled ‘An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union’ (COM(2007)0575),
- having regard to the Commission Green Paper of 7 June 2006 entitled ‘Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: a European vision for the oceans and seas’

(COM(2006)0275),

- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2011 on ‘Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe’¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 October 2010 on ‘Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) – Evaluation of progress made and new challenges’²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 May 2010 on strategic goals and recommendations for the EU’s maritime transport policy until 2018³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2008 on the regional development aspects of the impact of tourism on coastal regions⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2008 on an integrated maritime policy for the European Union⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 July 2007 on ‘A future maritime policy for the European Union: a European vision for the oceans and seas’⁶,
 - having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 20 March 2013 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – ‘Blue Growth – opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth’,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 31 January 2013 on ‘Blue Growth – opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth’,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinions of the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Fisheries (A7-0209/2013),
- A. whereas over 70 % of the earth's surface is covered by oceans and seas which can play a crucial role in addressing the long-term challenges facing the EU, such as climate change and global competitiveness;
- B. whereas there are six major coastal zones in the EU (the Atlantic, the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the outermost regions), which differ in their territorial resources and the type of activities pursued there;
- C. whereas approximately half of Europe’s population lives along the 89 000 kilometres of Europe’s coastline, and it is therefore important that regional and local authorities take this demographic pressure into account when implementing public policies;

¹ OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p.41.

² OJ C 70 E, 8.3.2012, p. 70.

³ OJ C 81 E, 15.3.2011, p. 10.

⁴ OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2010, p. 1.

⁵ OJ C 279 E, 19.11.2009, p. 30.

⁶ OJ C 175 E, 10.7.2008, p. 531.

- D. whereas technological progress and the search for new sources of sustainable growth are expected to increase the size of the maritime economy to EUR 590 billion by 2020, providing a total of 7 million jobs;
- E. whereas the expected increase in human activity will be taking place in a fragile marine environment in which only 10 % of marine habitats and 2 % of marine species are healthy, which demonstrates that maritime economic activities should not undermine marine sustainability;
- F. whereas investment in natural and human capital is essential in order to meet the current challenges, most notably that of making human activity economically and socially sustainable, ensuring environmentally sound conditions, and adapting to climate change so as to combat coastal erosion and marine acidification and preserve biodiversity, taking into account that healthy, productive ecosystems are vital for the development of a sustainable, competitive blue economy;
- G. whereas the size and scope of the environmental impacts of the Blue Growth focus areas are highly uncertain and potentially harmful, given our limited knowledge about the intricate complexity of the marine ecosystems, and related decision-making must therefore be guided by the precautionary principle enshrined in Article 191(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU);
- H. whereas the coastal and maritime policy should be included in the general framework of the 2014-2020 programming period, also with a view to achieving the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy;
- I. whereas the objective of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth for coastal and island areas must be backed up by a rigorous analysis of the systemic and structural handicaps that characterise these areas;
- J. whereas the EU's island system, as far as maritime transport is concerned, has to bear significantly higher costs than the other coastal areas of the EU;
- K. whereas the seasonal nature of tourism strongly compromises the development of coastal and island areas and an ad hoc strategy should be developed to counter this problem;
- L. whereas there is a need for coordination between the macro-regional strategies and the respective action plans for the Union's sea basins;
- M. whereas this report is Parliament's roadmap for the further advancement of blue growth;

General Framework

1. Welcomes the Commission's communication on Blue Growth, which forms the maritime dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy and gives a clear indication of the potential of the maritime economy to create smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and generate employment opportunities;
2. Welcomes the Commission's report on the progress of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP); reiterates its support for the IMP and stresses that the promotion of this policy remains the primary means for enhancing blue growth;

3. Acknowledges that the seas and oceans will increasingly play a key role in global economic growth in the future; considers that the Blue Growth Strategy, as part of the Integrated Maritime Policy, will encourage the development of synergies and coordinated policies, thus generating European added value and contributing to job creation in maritime sectors;
4. Considers that, in order to boost the competitiveness of the Union's maritime economic sectors in the global market, local, regional, national and European authorities must create the necessary conditions for sustainable growth, namely by establishing maritime spatial planning systems, upgrading infrastructure, creating access to professional skills and securing funding; stresses the importance of sharing information and best practices between the different levels of public authorities through the creation of a specific EU platform;
5. Notes that securing adequate funding will be a challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in blue growth sectors, and therefore welcomes initiatives such as new EU rules for venture capital funds, which will facilitate the access of SMEs to funding;
6. Considers that at a time when Member States are cutting public investment, it is urgently necessary that development policies and above all high-cost projects, such as transport, energy and telecommunications infrastructure projects, receive adequate funding during the 2014-2020 programming period and beyond; calls on the Member States to channel available financial instruments and European funding towards blue economy projects;
7. Stresses the importance of taking into account, in particular in the next multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, the specific needs of the bailed-out Member States that are facing increased difficulty in undertaking high-cost projects, as well as those of the outermost and island regions, which present structural constraints due to their remoteness and natural characteristics;
8. Notes the conditions of economic crisis and the social problems that are affecting many areas, particularly islands, above all in the Mediterranean and especially those which are very distant from the mainland; underscores that the remoteness of the islands in relation to the single market exposes them to industrial and economic stagnation and depopulation, which must be the target of specific measures on the part of the EU institutions; urges the Commission, therefore, to consider establishing free zones as a tool which, by reducing the tax burden and attracting foreign direct investment, could halt the downward spiral that is affecting island areas by driving growth and development;
9. Highlights the role of sea-basin strategies in fostering regional development and economic, territorial and social cohesion, revitalising the European economy, encouraging inclusive blue growth, creating jobs and protecting marine and coastal biodiversity; calls for such strategies, linked to current and future macro-regional strategies, to be effectively rolled out for all European maritime basins and for appropriate EU and other financial and administrative resources to be dedicated to their implementation; considers that the role played by the regions in drawing up sea-basin strategies needs to be strengthened; acknowledges, in this regard, the contribution of territorial and crossborder cooperation to addressing the problems faced by coastal and maritime regions;
10. Welcomes the progress made regarding implementation of the EU strategies for the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic regions, and reiterates its request to the Commission for the formulation of an EU strategy for the Black Sea region;

11. Calls on the Union and the Member States to give strong support to the creation of regional and crossborder maritime clusters; underscores the strategic importance of such clusters as centres of excellence for economic activity related to blue growth; believes that developing them will promote the sharing of knowledge and good practice, generate synergies between the various sectors of the blue economy, and help to attract investment;
12. Stresses the inherent linkages between economic growth and climate change, and emphasises that all maritime activities must be aligned with the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change with the view to contributing to a more climate-resilient Europe;
13. Stresses, in particular, that the increased economic activity associated with blue growth must not come at the expense of marine and coastal ecosystems, which are extremely sensitive and are among the first to suffer from the impacts of climate change; emphasises that blue growth must be compatible with the environmental objectives and the ecosystem approach of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), as well as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, recalling that in cases of uncertainty the precautionary principle must be observed; stresses that all economic activities associated with blue growth should ensure maritime safety and security;
14. Notes with concern the environmental impact of marine litter in all European sea basins, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to focus on the full implementation and enforcement of the relevant EU directives, such as those on waste management, port reception facilities for ship-generated waste, water quality and marine strategy;
15. Stresses that all maritime activities, including those that take place within the framework of the IMP, should be conducted in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); underscores the need for a common EU approach to the exploration, exploitation, conservation and management of the sea's natural resources, which ensures the efficient and secure delimitation of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) between EU Member States and third countries in accordance with international law;
16. Stresses, in that regard, the need for legal certainty for all stakeholders investing in maritime areas, and supports fresh incentives to boost the exploitation of Member States' exclusive economic zones;

Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management

17. Welcomes the Commission's legislative proposal for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) as measures necessary for managing the increasing number of maritime and coastal activities and protecting the marine environment, ensuring that various activities can coexist harmoniously and avoiding conflict over the use of coastal and sea areas; considers it necessary in this regard to opt for an ecosystems-based approach to the management of human activity on the coast and at sea;
18. Notes that MSP is expected to bring business costs down and improve the investment climate, while ICM will facilitate the coordination of activities in the coastal zone and will bring about an overall improvement in the governance of this zone;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that best practices are disseminated and that lessons are learned from preparatory actions in this area, since there are significant differences between Member States in the development of management

systems for maritime and coastal areas; considers, nonetheless, that a tailored approach is needed, so as to leave the Member States scope, when implementing EU maritime and coastal planning guidelines, for taking account of local specificities and needs in liaison with local authorities;

20. Believes that the land-sea interface needs to be strengthened in the context of spatial planning in order to safeguard continuity of human activities and of the supply chain and ensure that coastal areas are properly connected with their hinterland; believes that this could help avoid the phenomenon of coasts being treated as borders;
21. Stresses that the gaps in scientific knowledge on maritime activities and their environment constitute obstacles for spatial planning, and highlights the importance of the initiative 'Marine Knowledge 2020' and its specific objectives, such as the mapping of the seabed of European waters by 2020; considers that the seabed should be uniformly mapped so that the information can be accessed by interested European bodies, specifically research centres, universities, and public institutions;
22. Urges the Commission to help Member States launch plans to map and survey wrecked ships and submerged archaeological sites, which form an important part of the Union's historical and cultural heritage; stresses the need to facilitate the understanding and study of such sites and help prevent the despoliation to which they are being subjected, thus enabling them to be properly preserved;

Maritime skills and employment

23. Considers that overall employment in the blue economy may exceed the estimated number of 7 million jobs by 2020, if it is supported by training policies aimed at ensuring the presence of a mobile workforce with sufficient skills and experience;
24. Reiterates its call for a significant improvement in working, health and safety conditions in the maritime professions; encourages the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts in this field in order to improve career security and make jobs in the blue economy and related sectors more attractive;
25. Stresses the need to improve the working conditions of seafarers by appropriate means, to incorporate the ILO Maritime Labour Convention into Union law, and to propose a programme for the qualification and training of seafarers, in particular the recruitment of young people, including those from third countries;
26. Calls on the Commission to monitor closely and to support efforts at regional level to assess the skills and professions which will be in demand in blue economic sectors, and to ensure that initiatives such as the 'EU Skills Panorama' reflect the needs of the blue economy;
27. Considers that the Commission should, together with the Member States, draw up an action plan to promote professions that are directly or indirectly linked to the blue economy, in order to attract people into them;
28. Calls on the Commission to promote initiatives to encourage the mobility of workers between economic sectors and Member States, such as a multiannual action for exchanges of students, teachers and young professionals, on the Erasmus model; supports cooperation between enterprises and training providers with the aim of preparing graduates for jobs in

new areas;

29. Calls on the Commission to cooperate with the representatives of the maritime economic sector and training providers with a view to establishing and funding European Sector Councils on Employment and Skills, in order to register jobs, changes in skills required and related training needs;
30. Calls on the Commission to develop an initiative to encourage the mobility of research staff, especially in coastal areas, with specific reference to the areas of tourism, energy and biotechnology, along the lines of Erasmus, to be implemented as a priority during low tourist seasons in order to balance, in a sustainable manner, the flows of people in increasingly sensitive ecosystems, whilst at the same time optimising the use of the infrastructure of coastal areas and islands;

Research and innovation

31. Notes the EU's world-class research capacity in maritime fields and its importance for substantiated policy-making and innovation-driven business, but also the difficulty experienced by business in commercialising research output;
32. Underlines that the Horizon 2020 programme, with simpler procedures and better support for innovation, could provide significant aid for marine and maritime research with a view to enhancing market uptake, building on the experience of the 'Ocean of Tomorrow' projects;
33. Calls on the Commission to update its European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research by 2014, proposing concrete measures to improve synergies and knowledge dissemination among researchers in the EU;
34. Notes that only healthy marine ecosystems can be a basis for a sound and sustainable blue economy; calls on the Commission to continue researching the cumulative impacts of human uses of the marine environment and of maritime activities in all sectors;
35. Calls on the Commission to provide adequate long-term environmental monitoring and conduct research on early warning systems;
36. Emphasises the importance of projects like the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET) for facilitating the exchange and availability of research data;

Shipping and shipbuilding

37. Notes with concern that shipping within the EU continues to be hampered by administrative and customs red tape that compromises the vision of a European maritime transport area and prevents growth in the industry, especially in maritime cabotage and motorways of the sea; believes that a uniform set of rules for intra-Union shipping needs to be developed as it is crucial to ensuring the free movement of goods and persons in EU waters;
38. Is satisfied at the success of the 'Blue Belt' pilot programme, and calls on the Commission to make the necessary legislative proposals for the creation of the Blue Belt, including the necessary revision of the EU Customs Code, before the end of 2013;
39. Points out that the promotion of maritime transport will contribute not only to economic

growth and employment, but also to attaining the target set in the White Paper ‘Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area’ of shifting 50 % of road freight to the railways and waterborne transport by 2050;

40. Stresses the need to broaden the role of the motorways of the sea as main European corridors, and underscores that, in order to ensure the long-term competitiveness of European maritime transport, it is essential to create seamless transport chains for passengers and cargo across transport modes; calls on the Commission to issue a communication on the progress, development and future of the motorways of the sea; takes the view that major islands should be fully integrated into the motorways of the sea in order to improve their accessibility and increase their economic competitiveness;
41. Stresses that maritime safety is crucial for the sustainable promotion of maritime transport, sustainable economic growth, maritime employment and sustainable environmental standards in this sector; stresses that the principle of prevention should be applied to anticipate new risks and prevent all types of maritime transport disasters; notes that action in that matter must be taken within the EU, but also at international level, and notably within the International Maritime Organisation;
42. Stresses that implementation of the Third Maritime Safety Package is improving the quality of European flags, the activity of classification societies, port control, vessel traffic monitoring, accident investigation and victim protection; calls on the Member States to speed up the efficient implementation of this legislative package;
43. Stresses that maritime transport policy should take into account all relevant economic, environmental and public health concerns; calls on the Commission to closely monitor the impact of the EU shipping sector’s compliance with environmental and public health requirements and, where appropriate, propose specific measures to counteract negative effects on its competitiveness; notes that legislation requirements relating to the scrapping of ships and the sulphur content of marine fuels should ensure a high level of environmental protection, while safeguarding effectively the objective of shifting transport from road to sea, in line with the Union’s climate change targets;
44. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to significantly step up their efforts to reach an international agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from maritime transport, taking into account the growing impact of greenhouse gas emissions from ships;
45. Points out that eco-friendly fuels such as LNG can play an important role in achieving the target of reducing the EU’s CO₂ emissions from maritime bunker fuels by at least 40 % by 2050;
46. Emphasises the need to support the development of effective and sustainable port services and infrastructure that can cope with the challenges of the expected increase in shipping traffic, and of reducing environmental and noise pollution, shifting traffic from land to sea and ensuring the smooth switching of passengers and goods from one mode of transport to another; advocates the parallel development in European ports of ship repair and scrapping;
47. Draws attention to the possibility of setting up logistics platforms to facilitate the transport of goods between Europe and the other global economies; highlights the strategic importance of maritime transport and links between the outermost regions and other areas on the mainland;

48. Stresses that the EU shipbuilding industry has the potential to increase its contribution to growth and employment by exploiting the opportunities arising from demand for ‘clean ships’ (increased energy efficiency and reduced SO_x and NO_x emissions) as well as vessels and structures suitable for the construction, installation and operation of offshore wind farms; calls on the EU shipbuilding industry to take up this opportunity, especially given the expected increase in short sea shipping along the EU coastline;
49. Urges the Council to reach an agreement with Parliament to adopt a regulation providing for vessels to be dismantled in a way that respects the environment and the workers’ working conditions, thereby enabling the EU’s shipbuilding industry to recycle materials more competitively;
50. Calls on the Commission to facilitate the implementation of the LeaderSHIP 2020 strategy, by supporting the actions identified to address the challenges faced by the European shipbuilding industry, such as access to finance, skills and international competitiveness;

Maritime and coastal tourism

51. Calls on the Member States, with the direct involvement of local and regional authorities, as well as civil society organisations, to support initiatives to develop and upgrade sustainable tourism infrastructure, with particular emphasis on the needs of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility, and to make every effort to eliminate bureaucracy and lack of transparency in the sector while respecting environmental legislation;
52. Calls for tourism to be promoted and sustained as a driver for growth and jobs in coastal areas; takes the view that a healthy environment is fundamental to any form of tourism in coastal regions and that every effort must therefore be made to protect it; highlights the need to provide sustainable infrastructure for the development of new forms of tourism, in particular tourism sectors with high growth potential, such as eco-agro-fishing tourism and sustainable water sports; welcomes initiatives to promote crossborder tourism strategies on a sea-basin basis;
53. Emphasises that the erosion of the European coastline, the safeguarding of Europe’s environmental and animal heritage, and the improvement of water quality remain important issues to be tackled; stresses, therefore, the need to properly invest in these areas in order to develop sustainable and good-quality beach and underwater tourism;
54. Stresses that measures for exploiting and developing the coastal, maritime and marine heritage must be planned in parallel with measures for its conservation and restoration;
55. Notes the importance of creating or upgrading specialised high-level schools (for the administration and economy of tourism enterprises, for tourism professions, maritime colleges, cookery schools, etc) and of improving training provision with a view to boosting the quality of tourist services and products, the use of new technologies and the process of adapting to climate change;
56. Stresses the need to simplify visa procedures, to reduce the costs involved and to issue multiple-entry visas to visitors from third countries, in particular from the BRIC countries; calls on the Commission to investigate and immediately implement new, ‘smart’ ways of issuing tourist visas in order to maximise incoming tourist flows;

57. Stresses that the cruise industry is an important economic resource for European ports and neighbouring local communities, which is also vital in the development and use of more energy-efficient ships with lower emissions; encourages the planning of attractive tourist programmes designed to enhance the visitor's experience by highlighting the maritime, cultural and historical importance of port destinations;
58. Calls on the Commission to step up its efforts to boost the competitiveness of European ports by supporting and coordinating port infrastructure capacities and upgrading the services provided (e.g. by bringing them into line with the Schengen requirements) in order to make European ports more attractive for cruise ships and more beneficial for local and fishing communities, thereby enabling them to diversify their activities; calls on the Commission to take into account the particular features of ports in island and outermost regions;
59. Requests that it be made obligatory in port modernisation and expansion projects to equip passenger terminals and new passenger ships with facilities for people with reduced mobility;
60. Reiterates the importance of coastal and seagoing passenger transport, especially via ferries and cruise ships, and notes the entry into force of Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 on the rights of passengers travelling by sea, which should help enhance quality maritime tourism; calls on the Commission, in this connection, to set a campaign in motion to improve the quality of passenger and cruise ships with regard to passengers' rights, on the basis of operators' best practices;
61. Underscores the importance of yachting and sailing for maritime tourism; calls on the Commission to examine, in the context of its forthcoming communication on maritime tourism, the social and economic impact of this sector, the scope for harmonisation and simplification at EU level of the rules governing the issuing of operating licences, navigating and operating conditions, safety requirements, yacht maintenance and repair work, and the mutual recognition of professional qualifications in this sector;
62. Reasserts the importance of beach tourism as a feature of some European coastal regions; calls on the Commission to carry out an impact assessment to verify whether Directive 2006/123/EC could have a negative impact on SMEs in this sector, and, if deemed necessary, to propose measures to alleviate this impact and to ensure that the specific characteristics of this professional activity are taken into account in the application of the Directive;
63. Calls on the Commission to encourage the Member States, regions, autonomous communities and other stakeholders in coastal and island areas to develop and implement, in a systemic manner, the 'ancient trade routes' initiative approved by Parliament in the 2013 budget, both in the Mediterranean and in other European basins, especially in order to diversify tourism products and reduce the seasonal nature of tourism;
64. Calls on the Commission to include sustainable maritime, island and coastal tourism in related actions and programmes, such as the 'EDEN – European Destinations of Excellence' and the Calypso programmes, and to support initiatives that encourage the diversification of coastal, maritime and marine tourism, help make tourist activities and employment less seasonal and stimulate adaptation to climate change; considers, in this regard, that the diversification of tourism can help to increase the attractiveness of maritime

regions and enable them to move beyond the traditional ‘sun, sea and sand’ model;

65. Calls for the promotion of maritime resorts, as these can reduce seasonal variations and create a multiplier effect for local and regional economies, by integrating fishing communities and striking a balance between economic growth and sustainability;
66. Calls on the Commission to take account of the contribution and role of local culture and artisanal gastronomy in the development of European coastal tourism; considers it necessary to use and coordinate existing policies and tools and to draw up new programmes and actions in order to encourage synergies among, in particular, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the primary and tertiary sectors in coastal areas of the EU;
67. Urges the Commission to include in the Virtual Tourism Observatory a section dedicated to maritime and coastal tourism, ensuring links between research institutes, enterprises and public authorities with the aim of driving forward market research, providing enterprises and public authorities with forward-looking information on the development of supply and demand and creating more favourable business conditions, whilst also providing information on the links between biodiversity, climate protection and sustainable tourism initiatives;

Blue energy

68. Notes that climate change is one of the main threats to marine biodiversity worldwide, and that the energy aspects of a blue growth strategy must be based on renewable energies and energy efficiency;
69. Acknowledges, in that regard, the importance of Europe’s seas and oceans for the EU’s energy security and the diversification of its energy sources and supply routes;
70. Notes the potential of offshore wind, tidal, wave and ocean thermal energy, as well as of the conventional offshore energy sector, to generate sustainable jobs in coastal regions, reduce emissions and contribute to the EU’s medium and long-term energy targets; highlights the fact that significant investment in redeveloping grid connections and in transmission capacity will be required to exploit this potential;
71. Emphasises that blue energy is an asset for the European maritime economy; urges the Commission and the Member States to contribute to realising the potential of blue energy by making use of sea-basin strategies, paying special attention to the possibilities offered by the outermost regions owing to their location and natural characteristics;
72. Calls on the Commission actively to support the EU’s global leadership in this area by developing a European industrial strategy for blue energy, as it has done in the past for other sectors;
73. Calls on the Commission to adopt, in its forthcoming communication in this area, an integrated approach to the development of marine energy resources, by exploiting synergies between offshore wind energy and other forms of renewable marine energy; emphasises that such an approach must allow energy to be supplied from a full and sustainable range of sources, in line with the precautionary principle and ensuring maritime security and safety, and that it must also include plans for adequate infrastructure to transport sea-generated energy to land and ensure interconnection with the conventional electricity grid;

74. Calls on the Member States to work together to facilitate the sustainable construction of the North Sea Offshore Grid for renewable energy; calls on the Commission to make a proposal for a corresponding regulatory framework;

Fisheries and aquaculture

75. Emphasises that aquaculture and fisheries should contribute to food production on a sustainable basis throughout the Union and to long-term food security and consumer protection; considers that the development and innovation of a sustainable aquaculture and fish processing industry should be encouraged, by cutting down bureaucracy and promoting employment opportunities in these sectors and improving the quality of life in both coastal and rural areas;
76. Emphasises the importance of developing sustainable aquaculture in order to reduce overfishing of European fish stocks and dependence on imports of fish from third countries, which account for over 60 % of the fish consumed within the EU;
77. Points out that aquaculture in the EU already provides 80 000 jobs and has the potential significantly to improve the economies of coastal communities, bearing in mind UN estimates that production of farmed fish will exceed that of conventional fisheries by 2019;
78. Calls on the Commission, in its forthcoming strategic guidelines for aquaculture in the EU, to promote offshore aquaculture, which can be combined with blue energy facilities so as to reduce pressure from over-intensive aquaculture on coastal ecosystems and on other activities; highlights the need for the Member States' respective integrated management plans to simplify the administrative burden and ensure the allocation of suitable space for the development of these activities;
79. Stresses the importance of the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), which for the first time combines Integrated Maritime Policy and fisheries funding, as well as that of the European Investment Bank (EIB), in supporting the sustainable and environment-friendly development of fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing, as well as revenue diversification in fishing communities dependent on those sectors, in particular in respect of small-scale coastal fisheries, vocational training for women and young people, and attracting new entrepreneurs to the sector;
80. Acknowledges that protecting Europe's maritime borders is a challenge for Member States; considers that a successful blue economy requires secure EU maritime borders, with a view to ensuring the protection of the marine environment, fisheries controls, the fight against illegal fishing and law enforcement; points, therefore, to the importance of setting up a European coastguard to coordinate operations and surveillance at sea; stresses, furthermore, the importance of stepping up regional cooperation initiatives relating to the fisheries sector;

Marine mineral extraction

81. Recognises the existence of favourable conditions for marine mineral extraction; stresses, however, that the seabed environment is linked to the rest of the planet through interchanges of matter, energy and biodiversity, which, if disrupted, may cause unpredictable changes in fish stocks and a loss of biodiversity;
82. Calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to the environmental consequences of

mining the seabed, especially in highly sensitive marine environments, to support relevant research projects, to apply the precautionary principle, and to cooperate with the authorities of third countries involved in the sector in the attempt to fill existing gaps in scientific knowledge more rapidly;

83. Recognises that a more efficient use of resources, combined with enhanced recycling policies, offer a more cost-effective and sustainable approach to meeting our mineral needs than the intensive exploitation of underwater resources; deplores the fact that shortcomings in the recycling of raw and rare earth materials are contributing to an increase in waste, and calls, therefore, for measures to boost recycling industries so as to offer an alternative to sea mining; notes the long-term employment opportunities offered by this alternative approach;

Blue biotechnology

84. Recognises that blue biotechnology has the potential to create high-skilled employment and has much to offer in critical areas such as health, nutrition and innovation; welcomes the Commission's intention to support the research and innovation needed to promote this activity in the field of entrepreneurship;

85. Emphasises the potential of marine biodiversity, in particular in the still widely undiscovered deep sea, for the blue biotechnology sector, but stresses the need for a cautious exploration of this highly sensitive ecosystem;

86. Calls on the Commission to clearly define the issues and challenges related to blue biotechnology (for example bio-nanotechnology, biomaterials and the introduction of genetically modified fish, shellfish and micro-organisms), and to employ a scientifically sound approach based on the precautionary principle in order to identify, assess and manage the associated environmental and health risks;

87. Calls on the Commission to promote partnerships between the private sector and research institutes, as well as crossborder partnerships such as the European Marine Biological Resource Centre, since marine biotechnology and access to marine biodiversity require scientific knowhow and sophisticated and expensive equipment;

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88. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.