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A strategy for fisheries in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas

Committee on Fisheries

PE502.115

European Parliament resolution of 10 September 2013 on a fisheries strategy in the Adriatic and Ionian seas (2012/2261(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

– having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas’ (COM(2012)0713),

– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 of 21 December 2006 concerning management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea, amending Regulation (EEC) No 2847/93 and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1626/94[[1]](#footnote-1), as subsequently amended (the Mediterranean Regulation),

– having regard to its resolution of 6 February 2013 on the common fisheries policy[[2]](#footnote-2),

– having regard to its resolution of 22 November 2012 on the external dimension of the common fisheries policy[[3]](#footnote-3),

– having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC and to the obligation for Member States to take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment by the year 2020 at the latest,

– having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2012 on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean[[4]](#footnote-4),

– having regard to its position of 8 March 2011 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on certain provisions for fishing in the GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean) Agreement Area[[5]](#footnote-5),

– having regard to its resolution of 21 October 2010 on the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) – evaluation of progress made and new challenges[[6]](#footnote-6),

– having regard to the Commission proposal for a directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management (COM(2013)0133),

– having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on a new impetus for the strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture[[7]](#footnote-7),

– having regard to the Habitats Directive[[8]](#footnote-8),

– having regard to the declaration of 7 October 2012 of the European ministers responsible for the integrated maritime policy, and of the Commission, on a marine and maritime agenda for growth and jobs (the Limassol Declaration),

– having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Blue growth: opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth’ (COM(2012)0494),

– having regard to the European Council resolutions of 23-24 June 2011,

– having regard to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and the protocols thereto[[9]](#footnote-9),

– having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),

– having regard to Committee of the Regions’ own-initiative opinion of 12 October 2011 advocating the development of a new Adriatic-Ionian macro-region[[10]](#footnote-10),

– having regard to the Ancona Declaration, adopted on 5 May 2010 at the 12th Ionian Council meeting,

– having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 10 December 1982,

– having regard to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, adopted on 31 October 1995,

– having regard to International Labour Organisation (ILO) Recommendation 199 concerning work in the fishing sector,

– having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A7-0234/2013),

A. whereas seven countries have an outlet to the Adriatic and Ionian seas[[11]](#footnote-11), four of which are Member States (Italy, Greece, Croatia and Slovenia), one is a candidate country (Montenegro) and two are potential candidate countries (Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina);

B. whereas cross-border cooperation is essential in order to establish arrangements for the joint management of fishing activities and to make sure that fish stocks are exploited in a sustainable manner;

C. whereas, although some of the Adriatic countries have established special zones, a substantial proportion of the waters of the Adriatic and Ionian seas are still international waters;

D. whereas in its recent resolution on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies, Parliament stressed that the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy is a significant factor in efforts to achieve reconciliation between countries in the Western Balkans, and may assist those countries’ efforts to join the EU, thus enabling an overall policy for the whole Mediterranean basin to be implemented;

E. whereas the signatory states to the Ancona Declaration have called on the Commission to draw up a macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region, along the lines of the macro-regional strategies it has already put forward for the Baltic (2009), the Danube (2010) and the Atlantic Ocean (2011)[[12]](#footnote-12);

F. whereas in its resolution of 23-24 June 2011 the European Council invited the Member States to ‘continue work in cooperation with the Commission on possible future macro-regional strategies, in particular as regards the Adriatic and Ionian region’;

G. whereas, in a recent opinion, the Committee of the Regions has called on Parliament to support the establishment of an EU strategy for an Adriatic-Ionian macro-region that takes account of the major challenges facing the area, in particular as regards the fisheries and aquaculture sector;

H. whereas fishing has traditionally been an important industry in most of the regions facing on to the Adriatic and Ionian seas, and whereas fishing activities in this area are currently managed by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT);

I. whereas the principal geo-physical feature of the Adriatic sea basin***,*** especially in thenorthern part***,*** is a shallow and sandy seabed which only becomes deeper many miles out from the shore,the features of the Ionian sea basin are similar to those of the rest of the much deeper Mediterranean, in particular in GSAs (GFCM Geographical Sub-Areas) 18 and 19, which reach depths of up to 2000 metres;

J. whereas the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin is a multi-species fishery in which multi-gear fishing activities are carried out, ranging from small-scale artisanal fishing to demersal trawling and from pelagic mid-water trawling to recreational fishing;

K. whereas the Adriatic is home to a large number of endemic fish species; whereas, however, an increase in fishing effort and/or higher pollution levels have given rise to major problems for fish stocks and for the fishing industry in general, in particular on the Italian side of the southern Adriatic;

L. whereas, furthermore, over recent years there has been a considerable increase in aquaculture in the Adriatic-Ionian area, although there are major environmental and spatial constraints, and although not all areas are suited to the installation of offshore breeding facilities and, where they are, such facilities are not always compatible with other activities;

M. whereas a number of valuable regional schemes to promote scientific cooperation aimed at securing responsible fishing in the Adriatic Sea, such as Adriamed[[13]](#footnote-13), are already in progress;

N. whereas many Member States do not have specific national or regional development plans that regulate installations in coastal and marine areas and that clearly identify the zones available for aquaculture plants, thereby preventing easily foreseeable conflicts of interest with other economic sectors, such as tourism, agriculture and coastal fishing;

O. having regard to the Adriatic Protected Areas Network (AdriaPAN), the purpose of which is to optimise the management and planning of those areas through partnership;

P. whereas the development of an integrated approach to maritime policies in the Adriatic and Ionian seas needs to be accompanied by a dialogue and partnership process with all coastal states, given the transboundary nature of marine activities and shared resources;

***General considerations***

1. Points out that, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament now has full co-legislative powers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and intends to play its full part in shaping fisheries policy at EU level, as well as at regional and trans-regional level;

2. Believes that a strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian seas should make particular reference to the sustainable development and growth of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, including employment;

3. Believes that a strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian seas should strive to ensure the preservation and protection of the environment;

4. Welcomes the Commission communication of 3 December 2012 as an important step towards the adoption of a legislative framework that will foster closer cooperation between the countries and regions along the shores of the Adriatic and Ionian seas, with a view to ensuring that fishing is carried out in a responsible manner and is economically viable for coastal communities;

5. Believes, in this context, that the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) should play a vital role in developing a long-term strategic policy in the Adriatic and Ionian seas, aiming at sustainable marine and maritime growth and the preservation of marine ecosystems for future generations;

6. Believes further that maritime spatial planning – as the public process for analysing and planning the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in the Adriatic and Ionian Sea areas, in particular in the north of the Adriatic Sea – is vital for the sustainable future of the fishing sector in relation to other related activities;

7. Reiterates its support to the introduction of a macro-regional strategy for this important maritime area, with a view to addressing the shared challenges and problems faced by the inhabitants of the coastal regions concerned and to promoting economic development and European integration in the area;

8. Takes the view that all EU programmes and funding instruments[[14]](#footnote-14) for the regions in the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin, including the instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA), should be compatible with one another and should be used as efficiently as possible, so as to provide genuine added value for fishermen and fisheries sector operators;

9. Firmly believes that all efforts that are made to secure responsible, sustainable fishing in the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin can act as a catalyst for the development of coastal and rural areas in the countries concerned, and foster the development of combined economic activities – such as fishing tourism, in which professional fishermen take tourists or researchers out on fishing trips – which remain fully in keeping with the principle of practising a sustainable form of fishing that conserves the local environment and biodiversity;

10. Considers that the Barcelona Convention and its Protocol on Integrated Coastal Management, which entered into force in March 2011, could serve as a model to render an integrated policy compulsory for Member States bordering on the Adriatic and Ionian seas;

11. Considers the data available on Adriatic-Ionian fish stocks, their movements and their distribution, as well as on recreational fishing, to be unsatisfactory, and calls, accordingly, on the relevant authorities and research bodies to make good the shortcomings at the earliest opportunity;

12. Calls on the Commission to take further measures to promote research programmes relating to the marine environment and fisheries, and to encourage the utilisation and dissemination of the findings of this research;

13. Takes the view that successful schemes for cooperation in commercial matters between administrative bodies from various regions[[15]](#footnote-15) can serve as examples of best practice to be used in other areas with a view to enhancing the traceability, profitability and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, in particular local products;

14. Endorses the participation of all stakeholders for the development of a sustainable and productive fisheries sector in this area;

15. Considers it essential, with a view to ensuring the sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector throughout the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin and to boosting employment in coastal areas, for the vital work carried out by women in the fisheries sector to be given proper recognition, for it to be made easier for women to gain professional qualifications and for women to be included in coastal action groups and producer organisations;

16. Calls for incentives that can attract young people to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in this area and encourage them to engage in these activities;

17. Points out that Parliament has already in the past drawn attention to the need for simpler, more consistent and more transparent aquaculture legislation that removes the barriers which, to date, have prevented the potential of the EU’s aquaculture sector from being fully exploited, and that this will require the establishment of clear and consistent EU and national rules, together with the drafting of clearly defined marine and coastal development plans by the Member States, in line with the guidelines recently adopted by the GFCM[[16]](#footnote-16);

18. Points out that the targeted development of the aquaculture sector could generate non-seasonal jobs in Adriatic-Ionian coastal regions, which are heavily dependent on the summer tourist trade, thus giving a significant boost to employment in the area;

19. Stresses that the expansion of aquaculture activities must not jeopardise the achievement of good environmental status under Directive 2008/56/EC and shall be carried out in full compliance with all relevant Union environmental legislation;

20. Points out that the only way of ensuring that fish stocks and the marine environment can be protected against pollution and over-fishing and/or illegal fishing is to set up an integrated network of maritime activities information and monitoring systems, in close cooperation with the states and coastal regions affected;

***Specific considerations***

21. Urges the coastal countries of the Adriatic-Ionic sea basin to cooperate in drafting a global overview of the area’s specific geo-physical and bathymetric features, the presence and distribution of the various marine species and the different fishing techniques, in order to obtain an overall perspective to serve as a basis for improved fisheries management and help strengthen fisheries activity within the framework of any future macro-regional strategy;

22. Urges the Commission to adopt, at the earliest opportunity and by 2013 at the latest, the action plan for the practical implementation on a macro-regional basis of the maritime strategy for the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea, pointing out that the fisheries sector should form one of the priorities of that strategy, taking account of the specific geo-physical features and linking this plan of action to regional policy, the Union’s integrated maritime policy and the Connecting Europe Facility, so as to maximise its leverage effect;

23. Calls on the Commission to submit, at the earliest opportunity, a proposal for a regulation laying down common technical measures for fishing in the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin and specifying the admissible fishing effort, fishing periods and fishing gears and otherrelevant management measures;

24. Regrets that the Member States have not made greater use of these individual management plans, which allow certain general rules to be suspended so that specific characteristics can be taken into account; considers that this would have considerably facilitated local management and would have provided valuable data on the situation in the different zones, making it possible to introduce appropriate changes; asks, therefore, the coastal Member States to collaborate constructively with each other and with the Commission in updating and continuously adapting fisheries management measures;

25. Calls on the Commission to establish an ongoing dialogue with the non-EU countries of the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin, with a view to concluding bilateral or multilateral agreements with the aim of advancing towards a harmonisation and standardisation of the rules for fisheries management in order to achieve the objectives of the EU Common Fisheries Policy CFP in the Mediterranean while taking full advantage of the framework for collaboration provided by the international and regional fisheries organisations; points out that a strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian seas can only be of added value if all bordering countries, EU and non EU-countries alike, are taken into account;

26. Calls on the Commission to promote CFP objectives, notably the goal of achieving above maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for all fish stocks by 2020 at the latest, and to encourage the employment of an ecosystem-based approach vis-à-vis non-EU countries;

27. Calls on the Commission to step up exchanges of best conservation practice, in cooperation with the coastal states, and to promote the establishment of marine protected areas for the recovery of the most threatened species;

28. Calls on the Commission to promote the goals of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) vis-à-vis non-EU countries bordering on the Adriatic and Ionian seas, namely to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment by the year 2020 at the latest;

29. Calls, in this regard, on the Commission to encourage those Member States bordering on the Adriatic and Ionian seas to develop and implement marine strategies that take an eco-system-based approach and that ensure the integration of environmental concerns into the different policies that have an impact on the marine environment, taking into account the trans-boundary effects on the quality of marine waters of neighbouring third countries;

30. Recalls that funding exists, both under the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), through its data collection programmes, and within the framework for the Union’s various research programmes, for improving knowledge of the marine environment, including fish species, and for introducing greater innovation and better practices in fisheries activity; calls, therefore, on the Member States to put forward projects in these areas, and considers that advance cooperation among the various coastal countries, whether or not they belong to the EU, can lead to extremely interesting initiatives able to benefit the whole of the Adriatic-Ionian basin, through projects presented by the Member States;

31. Calls on the Commission to consider whether a specific funding line for implementation of the measures and objectives laid down for this strategy should be created in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB), drawing on the experience gained with the FEMIP[[17]](#footnote-17) so as to avoid further complicating matters through the adoption of new budgetary instruments; calls on the Commission to consider as well the possibility of using project bonds and public-private partnerships as eminently suitable financing instruments;

32. Calls on the Commission to propose that specific advisory bodies for the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea should be set up within the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) already established for the Mediterranean area, drawing on the positive experience gained with the ‘maritime districts’ that have been set up in Italian waters[[18]](#footnote-18) (such as the Northern Adriatic fisheries district, established in 2012 for the shared and concerted management of the northern Adriatic fisheries sector from a political, economic, social and environmental point of view);

33. Calls on the Commission to include in the future legislative proposal on maritime spatial planning provisions obliging maritime Member States to make inventories of the environmental and tourism protection rules in force on their respective national territories and, in respect of areas not subject to restrictions, to adopt marine and coastal development plans establishing the admissibility and compatibility of the use and occupation of these areas, with a view to facilitating access to areas suitable for setting up aquaculture undertakings;

34. Calls on the Commission to establish a specific Work Plan for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, setting out the future objectives in that region as is currently undertaken in the Mediterranean Sea (IMP-MED project); stresses that this Work Plan should be seen as a project eligible for funding under the EMFF;

35. Urges the Commission to create a toolbox of sanction measures to ensure that a Member State that does not fulfil its data collection and transmission obligations, or is unable to tackle problems with illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in its waters or by its fishing fleet, can be sanctioned;

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36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

1. OJ L 409, 30.12.2006, p.11; OJ L 36, 8.2.2007, p. 6; OJ L 196, 28.7.2011, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0040. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0461. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0269. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. OJ C 70 E, 8.3.2012, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Council Directive 92/43/EEC (OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0128. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Opinion COTER-V-016, rapporteur Gian Mario Spacca (ALDE/IT), October 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) definition puts the southern boundary of the Ionian Sea at a line drawn between Capo Passero (Sicily) and Cape Tenaron (Greece). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. COM(2009)0248, COM(2012)0128, COM(2010)0715 and COM(2011)0782. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Adriamed is an FAO regional project funded by the [Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies](http://www.politicheagricole.it) (MiPAAF) and the Commission that seeks to promote scientific cooperation among the Adriatic countries (Albania, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia), in line with the UN FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Structural Funds (ERDF, CF, ESF, EFF/EMFF), FP7 and LIFE+. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Such as the Socio-economic Observatory for Fishing and Aquaculture in the North Adriatic. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Resolution GFCM/36/2012/1 on guidelines on Allocated Zones for Aquaculture (AZA), adopted at the 36th meeting of the GFCM (May 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ‘Maritime districts’ were set up to improve cooperation between central and regional government in developing and providing support for the fisheries and aquaculture sector and to promote partnership with fishermen and fisheries sector operators. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)