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on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy
(2008/2222(INI))

Committee on Fisheries

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on applied research relating to the common fisheries policy (2008/2222(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the common fisheries policy¹,
- having regard to Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the seventh framework programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)²,
- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled 'A European strategy for marine and maritime research: a coherent European research area framework in support of a sustainable use of oceans and seas' (COM(2008)0534) ('the marine and maritime research strategy'),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a strategy for the sustainable development of European aquaculture (COM(2002)0511),
- having regard to its resolution of 15 June 2006 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the seventh framework programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities³,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2008 on an integrated maritime policy for the European Union⁴,
- having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)⁵,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 of 25 February 2008 concerning the establishment of a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common

¹ OJ L 358, 31.12.2002, p. 59.

² OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

³ OJ C 300 E, 9.12.2006, p. 400.

⁴ OJ C 180 E, 17.7.2008, p. 27.

⁵ OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

fisheries policy¹,

- having regard to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora²,
 - having regard to the report of the world summit on sustainable development held in Johannesburg (South Africa) from 26 August to 4 September 2002³,
 - having regard to the Aberdeen Declaration adopted on 22 June 2007 at the EurOCEAN conference by European marine and maritime research organisations, scientific networks and a large number of scientists from across Europe,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A6-0000/2008),
- A. whereas the Commission has sought to stimulate European research on fisheries and aquaculture since the 4th framework programme in order to support the common fisheries policy (CFP),
- B. whereas in the 7th framework programme, all research on fisheries and aquaculture is incorporated in the wider context of research on agriculture (thematic area 2), whilst marine sciences and the management of coastal zones come under environmental science,
- C. whereas the code of conduct for responsible fishing of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the conservation and management of fish stocks that move both within and outside exclusive economic zones (straddling stocks) and of highly migratory fish stocks both stress the need to develop research activities and the collection of data in order to improve scientific knowledge of the sector,
- D. whereas the CFP is among the Community policies most dependent on scientific research and the credibility of the measures adopted under this policy rests on high-quality scientific opinions,
- E. whereas the CFP is founded on principles of good governance, which require that the decision-making process should be based on serious scientific opinions and should produce timely results,
- F. whereas the marine and maritime research strategy, whilst recognising the importance of continuing efforts in the various marine and maritime disciplines, focuses on improving interactions between marine research and maritime research rather than targeting research sectors that are already well established,
- G. whereas the forthcoming review of the CFP, attaching greater importance to regional and

¹ OJ L 60, 5.3.2008, p. 1.

² OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

³ <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/636/94/PDF/N0263694.pdf?OpenElement>

ecosystem management, requires a solid basis of scientific knowledge,

1. Is convinced that it is necessary, in the policies pursued with regard to research, to pay greater attention to the specific problems of fisheries and aquaculture in view of this sector's economic, social and political importance in the EU;
2. Welcomes the fresh effort made by the Commission through its marine and maritime research strategy to mobilise resources with a view to improved integration between marine research and maritime research;
3. Reminds the Commission that, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002, it has a legal obligation to base its proposals relating to the CFP on 'sound scientific advice and on the precautionary approach';
4. Is concerned at the reorganisation of themes in the 7th framework programme, which means that research on fish production has been separated from fisheries and marine ecology, even though a clear reorientation of the CFP towards an ecosystem approach would on the contrary require a greater degree of integration;
5. Deplores that the 7th framework programme does not consider either fisheries or aquaculture as specific strands and refers only to thematic area 2, 'Food, agriculture and biotechnology', which might cover fisheries research, but only distantly and if interpreted in the wider sense; notes that the same applies to thematic area 6, 'Environment (including climate change)';
6. Calls on the Commission to review the 7th framework programme when the mid-term evaluation is carried out, scheduled for 2010, taking account of this resolution and paying greater attention to the specific problems of fisheries and aquaculture;
7. Is convinced that both policy-makers and operators in the fisheries sector have a crucial need for a more practical type of research and, given the duration of the 7th framework programme, it is imperative to include the objectives to be achieved;
8. Takes the view that, owing to the absence of specific strands for fisheries and aquaculture in the 7th framework programme, there is not enough incentive for a sufficient number of research projects to be drawn up in these areas, which has a detrimental effect on the importance and relevance of the projects selected;
9. Stresses that, in order to guarantee the effective implementation of the CFP, specific programmes need to be put in place in the field of applied research, and their funding needs to be ensured through an adequate budget allocation; takes the view that, to this end, it is vital to include an allocation key in the 7th framework programme;
10. Calls on the Commission for the funding of applied research in the field of the CFP under the 7th framework programme to be used as a lever to promote synergies between research efforts in the various Member States and attain the critical mass necessary to meet the great challenges of cross-thematic marine research;
11. Recommends that, in the field of scientific marine research, priority be given not only to

research to gain knowledge of the state of fish stocks but also to the commercial, economic and social aspects that determine fisheries management, since all these aspects are of crucial importance;

12. Takes the view that, in the fields of fisheries and aquaculture in particular, priority should be given to applied research whose fundamental objective should be to improve the scientific data used as a basis for legislation and fisheries management, particularly as regards recovery plans for species at biological risk;
13. Notes a clear conflict of interest between fishermen and scientists in the short term, whereas their long-term objectives appear to be more compatible;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to demonstrate and better convey to fishermen that it is in their interest to take into account the economic benefit that they can expect in the medium or long term in the assessment of their presumed short-term economic loss;
15. Stresses the worrying problem of the deficit of young scientists in applied research in the fisheries sector, because careers are not very attractive compared to basic research and other scientific disciplines;
16. Stresses the need to re-establish interesting and status-enhancing university degree courses leading on to remunerative careers for this scientific path;
17. Is in favour of an education policy that provides greater motivation for young scientists to take up applied research in the fisheries sector, instead of basic research;
18. Urges the Commission to promote the creation of a stable European network, based on existing physical infrastructure in the Member States and geared to the observation of and collection of data on the marine environment, that would facilitate the exchange of information between operators in the sector and European research bodies and would maintain the EU in a position of excellence;
19. Recalls the need to standardise the various applied research models currently used in the Member States to make it easier to compare the results and facilitate the aggregation of data;
20. Calls on the Commission to encourage the scientific community to draw up more common methodology standards in fisheries research and step up cooperation between national research institutes;
21. Calls on the Commission to gather specific information on the way in which the dialogue between scientists and fishermen currently operates in the various Member States and to list best practices;
22. Stresses that the regional advisory committees have an important role to play in the context of applied research and asks, consequently, that it should be possible for scientists to be full members of these bodies;

23. Calls on the Commission and Member States to allocate the appropriations entered in the EU budget for the collection of data in the fisheries sector, in particular under budget heading 11 07 02: 'Support for the management of fishery resources (improvement of scientific advice)';
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

‘Where there is no science to apply, there can be no applied science’ *Bernardo Houssay, Nobel Prize for medicine (1947)*

Virtually half the Community population lives in areas close to the two oceans and four seas under European jurisdiction. These seas and oceans, the source of life, play an important moderating role in the context of climate change. They are complex systems that are hard to understand, and managing them correctly is one of the main challenges facing us.

Reconciling the preservation of ecosystems and the sustainable exploitation of resources, preventing and controlling the impact of the various human activities on the marine environment and improving the level of knowledge, technological development and innovation are further challenges that cannot be tackled without the participation of the European scientific community.

With regard to fish stocks, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimated in 2004 that more than 70% of stocks were either depleted, over-exploited or recovering. But other factors in addition to over-fishing have an impact on resources, such as climate change and human activity, and it is therefore vital to have complete and reliable data.

Coastal zones are subject to risks arising from their particular geographical situation, such as natural disasters or accidents followed by serious maritime pollution. In this area, the surveillance of Community waters entails mobilising all available resources, including research.

Marine ecosystems are particularly vulnerable and require special attention, even more so given that in future the ecosystem approach will be essential when decisions are to be taken. Protected marine areas need to be clearly defined on the basis of an integrated approach supported by sound scientific criteria that will be capable of protecting them from activities other than fishing as well, such as tourism, oil extraction and military activities.

Marine research as an axis for the management of the seas and oceans

Implementing a common fisheries policy is inseparable from effective research at European level. It is the Community’s responsibility to make use of the strengths of research and innovation in order actively to protect our seas and oceans, by shaping an integrated fisheries management based on high-quality scientific and technological development.

Fisheries research is also vital when drawing up recommendations and providing scientific advice to lawmakers. The most important tool for fisheries, the common fisheries policy, requires greater investment in marine science and research so it can become more effective.

In the past 15 years, the Commission has provided the scientific community with significant material resources intended to support decisions on fisheries management. European researchers took account not only of biological considerations but also the behaviour of fishing gear, the biological impact of catches on fisheries and the socio-economic consequences of the decisions to be taken. But the development of the CFP and of other

related policies has created new research needs.

Need for responsible, high-quality fisheries research

Even though there is a degree of controversy between basic and applied research, what is quite certain is that any type of research must result in knowledge 'that can or must be applied'. Scientists themselves state that the most useful procedures have been the result of basic research, and there should therefore be no split between the two types of research. If a solution is to be found to real and current problems, all the means available must be exploited regardless of the 'style' used.

A healthy marine environment is indispensable for the potential that the oceans offer to be materialised: the preservation of resources is vital in order to improve competitiveness in the long term. The thematic strategy for the marine environment calls for rapid action based on an ecosystem approach. All decision-making processes will have to include the environmental dimension and reflect the interests of all activities that have an impact on this environment.

The commitments given by the EU at the Johannesburg summit can be achieved only through responsible, high-quality marine research: acquiring and studying scientific data is crucial for the ecosystem approach, for establishing protected marine areas, for guaranteeing the sustainable and beneficial exploitation of resources and providing a response to any challenge linked to natural phenomena or disasters caused by human activities. Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels also require accurate and constant information.

Gathering, storing, circulating/exchanging, processing and studying a large amount of information and data is crucial to ensure that social demands and natural considerations are balanced. The sustainability of resources also requires good cooperation between the fishing industry, oceanography, fisheries research, marine ecology, socio-economic researchers, marine research institutes and associations.

Future fisheries research will need to take account of aspects linked to habitats (reducing the impact on the seabed, identifying biologically sensitive areas), accidental catches of vulnerable species (birds, turtles or marine mammals), improvements in the selection of target species (avoiding discards and by-catches) and the ecosystem-based integration of studies on stocks with studies on oceanography, biochemistry and biodiversity.

Need to work in a network

Improving scientific data on fisheries is an urgent task. Europe possesses the necessary research teams and knowledge for the sustainable exploitation of marine resources. But, in addition to data-collection centres and observation networks, marine research also requires a wide variety of expensive and specialised infrastructure that absorbs a major share of investment, and shared use of such infrastructure would therefore optimise its benefits.

A stable European network based on the physical infrastructure that already exists in the Member States and geared to observation and the collection of data on the marine environment would foster the exchange of information between European sectors and research bodies and would keep the EU at the forefront.

Developing and implementing such a network would help promote understanding and dialogue between the scientific community, lawmakers and end-users, including the industry and trade. Intensifying cooperation between national research institutes would also help to standardise the different applied research models used in the Member States so as to make it easier to compare the results and facilitate the aggregation of data.

Its tasks would include the coordination of specific tasks and advice on the application of Community legislation. Its creation would not impinge on the participation of research institutions in the various international agencies and bodies and would be extremely beneficial for the development of European marine sciences.

Education and training

Qualified personnel, which is vital for activities linked to the marine environment, is in steady decline in all areas. A particular concern in applied fisheries research is the scarcity of young scientists, a circumstance that experts attribute to the lack of attractiveness of such careers. The point has now been reached where institutes specialising in fisheries research in some Member States have been forced to close owing to the lack of students.

Remedying this situation would entail establishing interesting and status-enhancing university courses leading on to well-paid careers. We need an education policy that will motivate young scientists to take up research in the field of fishery resources.

In order to do so, it will be necessary to improve education and training, mobility and professional reorientation as well as working conditions, especially with regard to research activities focusing on fisheries but also in other related sectors. It will also be necessary to enhance the profile and incentives for scientists, which will produce an improvement in marine science in general and fisheries research in particular.

Need for adequate funding

Even though the phrase '*Not money, but human resources is the problem!*' sums up the situation very well, this does not mean that there is a surplus of financial resources for research in this area. In addition to the adequate use of scientific and technological knowledge, the challenges require decisive financial support from the EC and the Member States.

Up to now, the various research institutes have been funded through two channels: national funds in exchange for providing Member State governments with scientific information, and Community funds under the directive on basic data collection and through their participation in the scientific committees.

The third source of funding was the research framework programme. The 4th and 5th FPs included specific programmes for fisheries and aquaculture (FAIR) intended for the applied marine research sector, with funding of EUR 130 and 150 million. Fisheries policy was still a priority in the 6th FP, even though the amount of funding was reduced to EUR 60 million. In contrast, the 7th FP does not treat either fisheries or aquaculture as a specific strand. Only

thematic area 2, 'Food, agriculture and biotechnology' could, if interpreted in the wider sense, cover research in these fields. Thematic area 6, 'Environment (including climate change)' does not specifically include research on marine resources and integrated coastal zone management either.

Scientists face difficulties when submitting projects to the 7th FP owing to the differing approach taken in research on topics linked to aquaculture, for example, which are basically industrial in nature, and on topics relating to fisheries or marine sciences, which are multidisciplinary and more long-term in nature. Until now, both fields were covered by the same funds, thus allowing complementarity, and they were coordinated by DG Fisheries rather than DG Research.

The outcome is that it has become more difficult for the scientific community to communicate the concerns and needs of the sector to the officials responsible for drawing up calls for proposals. For its part, DG Research has opted chiefly to finance basic research rather than accommodating research geared to public policies in order, for example, to boost the scientific component of the Community marine strategy, or study fishing's contribution to climate change.

To sum up, the objective of EU maritime policy, achieving productive fishing in a clean marine environment, requires scientists working in this area to have access to horizontal financing mechanisms under the 7th FP.

We insist on the need urgently to implement a specific science policy geared to fishery resources, accompanied by a significant financial effort. EU support for marine training and education will make it possible to integrate the various points of view, social, economic, maritime and commercial, and will help to improve the way in which the common fisheries policy is generally viewed and heighten awareness of the need to maintain it.