European Parliament
2019-2024

Committee on Fisheries

2019/2161(INI)

20.10.2020

DRAFT REPORT

Fishers for the future: Attracting a new generation of workers to the fishing industry and generating employment in coastal communities
(2019/2161(INI))

Committee on Fisheries

Rapporteur: Manuel Pizarro

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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The European Parliament,

– having regard to Article 3(2) and (3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and to Article 4(2)(a), (d) and (k), and Articles 9 and 153 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy,

– having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,

– having regard to the International Convention of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS),

– having regard to the Convention establishing the International Maritime Organisation (IMO),

– having regard to the Convention establishing the International Labour Organisation (ILO),

– having regard to the Torremolinos Convention (1977),

– having regard to the Torremolinos Protocol (1993) and the Cape Town Agreement (2012) updating and amending the Torremolinos Convention,

– having regard to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F),

– having regard to the Convention on work in the fishing sector C188 (2007) of the ILO,

– having regard to the IMO 2005 Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels,

– having regard to the Europêche report, Cogeca 'Fisheries' & E.T.F. – European Transport Workers' Federation (December 2000) 'Mutual Recognition of Certificates in the Sea Fishing Sector in Europe, Final Report', also known as the Bénodet Report, a study prepared for the forum held on this issue in Bénodet (FR), on 13 and 14 October 2000, p. 9,

– having regard to the conclusions of document entitled 'Training of Fishers'[1], European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies (2018),

[1] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/617484/IPOL_STU(2018)617484_EN.pdf

– having regard to the '2019 Annual Overview of Marine Casualties and Incidents'[2] of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA),

– having regard to the 2019 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 19-06)[3],

– having regard to the FAO report 'The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020'[4],

– having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A9-0000/2020),

A. whereas the common fisheries policy (CFP) aims to ensure that fishing and aquaculture are sustainable in the long term and that this sustainability is based on three pillars – environmental, social and economic;

B. whereas fishing, including aquaculture, provides food to billions of people, and whereas this sector is an important source of employment and income for the livelihoods of 10-12% of the world's population, according to the FAO; whereas, in addition, an estimated 140 million further jobs are related to the rest of the fisheries value chain, in particular in the processing and sale of fisheries products;

C. whereas, according to information gathered by the FAO, women account for more than 20% of jobs related to aquaculture production, but only around 3% of those in productive fishing;

D. whereas, according to the latest Eurostat data[5], a total of around 180 000 people were employed in the EU fisheries industry in 2017, of whom around one third in the aquaculture sub-sector; whereas, of that total, 41 000 people were employed in the primary fisheries sector in Spain, and a further 29 000 in Italy, 21 000 in Greece, 20 000 in France and 14 700 in Portugal; whereas, although Italy, Greece and Portugal accounted for only 11% of EU fishing production in 2017, these three Member States accounted for 35.9% of employment;

E. whereas statistical data published by Eurostat[6] in 2019 shows that, in 2018, in the 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries' sector a total of 14.4% of workers were aged 65 or over, and whereas this is the sector which employs the largest number of persons in this age group; whereas, although the proportion of workers in this age group has been decreasing consistently since 2008, the actual number of employees in this age group has not decreased by the same proportion;

[2] http://www.emsa.europa.eu/news-a-press-centre/external-news/item/3734-annual-overview-of-marine-casualties-and-incidents-2019.html
[3] Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – The 2019 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF-19-06). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, JRC112940, ISBN 978-92-79-79390-5, doi:10.2760/56158)
[4] https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9229en
[5] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fishery_statistics#The_factors_of_production
[6] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10166544/KS-02-19%E2%80%91681-EN-N.pdf/c701972f-6b4e-b432-57d2-91898ca94893

F. whereas, even without any specific data covering only the fisheries sector, it is possible to obtain some information on the age of fisheries workers in some of the Member States' statistics services; whereas the figures show that the percentage of fishers aged 55 or older has been increasing in the last 10 years and currently stands at some 20% of active fishers and, on the other hand, the percentage of young fishers (aged 34 or younger) does not display a clear trend, remaining between 20 and 23% of active fishers;

G. whereas, even so, the majority of Member States and the EU's economic partners in the fishing industry refer often to young people's lack of interest in fishing, a fact which was first acknowledged at least two decades ago, and which creates additional difficulties in the industry as a whole and exacerbates social problems in coastal communities;

H. whereas, where accidents and incidents at sea are concerned, of all maritime vessels, fishing vessels are the ones most often lost, although fishing is not the activity that generates the most accidents, with a 40% increase recorded in 2018 in the number of incidents involving fishing vessels;

I. whereas, despite the increase in the number of incidents, the number of fatalities arising from accidents and incidents on fishing vessels has shown a downward trend, with the vast majority of incidents being the result of human factors (62.4%) and system/equipment failures being the second most common cause (23.2% of incidents);

J. whereas safety issues – fishing activity is universally considered a risky profession – and the arduous nature of work on fishing boats are significant factors in younger people's lack of interest in fishing;

K. whereas the lack of standardisation in certification and basic training for fishers, as well as in their recognition among Member States, was identified as a constraint two decades ago, and whereas few developments have been made;

L. whereas the results of the economic performance of the EU fleet generally indicate improvements in income and an annual increase in profits and average earnings for fishers, but when analysed in detail by Member State, sea basin and fishing fleet, these trends are not universal and, in particular, are not reflected in trends among the EU's small-scale coastal fleet;

M. whereas, a significant proportion of fishermen have low and irregular incomes, which do not provide them with enough social protection, and these facts are a further factor that lessens fishing's attractiveness among young people;

Better information and profiling of the active population in the fisheries sector

1. Stresses the need to improve how information on the active population in the fisheries and aquaculture production sector, and in the whole value chain, is collected and made available on a regular and systematic basis at EU level and broken down by Member State;

2. Points out that aggregation of statistical data within the large 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' sector can hide or camouflage situations and variations, with a negative effect

for each of these sectors; stresses that, although they are all primary production sectors, their activities are not interconnected and, in the case of fisheries, they do not even take place in the same environment or geographical area;

3. Reiterates that, as with stock and habitat management, the best scientific knowledge, based on reliable, near-real data with extended time series, is key to managing and monitoring social developments in the sector, particularly employment developments, without which it will not be possible to follow up and fully implement one of the three sustainability pillars advocated under the CFP – the social pillar;

4. Points out that the information made available by different bodies seems to demonstrate an ageing of EU fishing crews, but that, as with fisheries management and adaptation of measures taken, the management, monitoring and implementation of actions should be differentiated on the basis of geographical area, fishing fleets and, in some circumstances, fishing gear used;

5. Urges the Commission, particularly Eurostat, and the Member States, to take account of employment trends, not only in relation to the total number of jobs, but also with regard to the level of training and age structure of the working population in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and, if possible, also in the fisheries and aquaculture value chain, producing data in this respect in similar detail to those that exist for monitoring economic activity and the performance of the sector in a specific way;

Better working and living conditions on board to improve safety

6. Points out that, although safety conditions on board have improved, particularly on larger vessels, the number of incidents and accidents recorded by EMSA in 2018 increased by 40% compared with the previous year, despite the fact that the number of fatalities has been falling steadily in recent years;

7. Points out that EMSA alone is responsible for intervening and collecting data related to marine casualties and incidents involving fishing vessels more than 15 m long, or in situations where vessels less than 15 m long are involved in accidents involving vessels that fall within the scope of Directive 2009/18/EC[7] and, therefore, accidents and incidents involving fishing vessels will definitely be higher than the records available in EMSA's annual reports;

8. Points out that professional maritime activities in general are considered high risk and dangerous, particularly fishing, and this situation is made worse by the fact that 85% of EU vessels are small-scale coastal vessels (less than 12 m in total length) and are, therefore, exposed to greater risks caused by adverse weather conditions and by operating close to shore;

9. Stresses that, despite international and EU efforts to improve safety conditions on board vessels, particularly fishing vessels, the international conventions setting out the rules and systems for the protection of ships and persons on board apply only to larger and newly built vessels;

10. Reiterates that working and living conditions on board cannot be seen separately from

[7] OJ L 131, 28.5.2009, p. 114-127

safety conditions; takes the view that good working and living conditions on vessels improve the safety conditions in which fishing operations are carried out, as does time to rest for fishers, with direct implications for their safety, as a large percentage of accidents and incidents on fishing vessels continue to be linked to human error, whether caused by lack of knowledge or training or by fatigue;

11. Points out that maritime workers, including fishers, are often excluded from the scope of European and Member States' national legal frameworks on labour, taking into account that many rules do not apply to the reality of these workers' activities; points out that, as it is not possible to apply general labour schemes, it is necessary to ensure that a number of basic premises related to employment regulations are provided, in a tailored manner, for seafarers and, in particular, for fishers;

12. Points out that, depending on the fishing gear used, the size of the vessel, the area of operation and the weather conditions, fishing presents different risk factors with regard to the working and living conditions that need to be provided on board;

13. Recalls the steps taken internationally, particularly under the Torremolinos Protocol (1993) and the Cape Town Agreement (2012), to amend and improve the Torremolinos Convention (1977), which was established as a means to address fishing vessel safety, and points out that, even with the 2012 reduction in requirements, this Convention is still not in force;

14. Welcomes the establishment of the IMO 2005 Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels, points out, however, that as voluntary guidelines, they can serve only as guidance, and no legal obligation or standardisation of basic norms is applicable to small-scale coastal fishing vessels;

15. Recalls that the ultimate goal of the CFP is to make fishing activity socially, environmentally and economically sustainable, and that only with good working, living and safety conditions will it be possible to attract young people and achieve the generational renewal of this activity which provides EU citizens with healthy food;

16. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the best safety, work and living standards are in place on fishing vessels, regardless of their size; proposes that steps be taken to establish basic legal rules applicable in a uniform and cross-cutting manner to the entire EU fishing fleet, taking into account specific characteristics concerning vessel size and the types of fishing operation for which vessels are intended;

17. Insists on the need to ensure that the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) makes a significant contribution to improving the working, living and safety conditions on EU vessels, finding ways to improve those conditions without increasing fishing capacity, with particular attention paid to small-scale coastal fishing vessels;

18. Insists, further, on the need for regular monitoring and statistical information on incidents and accidents involving vessels not covered by Directive 2009/18/EC, as it is only by monitoring and assessing changes in these figures, by geographical areas, fleets and fishing gear used, that it will be possible to find solutions that make improvement possible and that reduce and prevent the occurrence of such accidents, particularly in local and coastal fishing vessels;

19. Suggests that the Commission look, in this context, into recasting EMSA's mission, giving it the capacity to carry out this monitoring and to regularly present information on it;

Better training and ensuring that training is recognised at EU level

20. Stresses that the Bénodet 2000 report, which identified the problems concerning young people's lack of interesting in fishing, and shone a spotlight on the diversity and complexity of training and certification systems for fishers among Member States, seems to have been forgotten and that, two decades later, no significant developments have been made;

21. Points out that the movement of labour between Member States, and even from third countries to the EU, is increasing and that any generational renewal of labour in fisheries that this movement could lead to continues to be hampered by the absence of standardisation in training and certification systems for fishers;

22. Stresses that this situation clearly undermines the free movement of persons, which is a founding principle of the EU, as reflected in many treaty provisions;

23. Points out that even if a fisher from a third country has labour certifications recognised in the fishing area, it is difficult for a Member State to make it possible for that person to access the same work in another Member State;

24. Stresses that in other areas of maritime activity, both recreational and professional, major developments have been made towards international recognition of training, irrespective of the country in which it is obtained, and all that is needed is for basic training to be standardised and provided by schools or educational institutions which are part of the internationally recognised national education systems of each Member State or third country;

25. Notes that, under the 1995 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), the ILO establishes a number of fundamental standards regarding working conditions, including minimum safety training requirements for all types and sizes of fishing vessel; points out that, while this convention has been in force since September 2012, it applies only in those countries that have ratified it;

26. Points out that, while the acquisition of practical knowledge and hands-on work experience provides a solid basis that remains valid for the training of fishermen in a number of Member States, formal certification provides the only guarantee that the necessary knowledge has been properly assimilated; notes that formal certification not only enhances the personal status of fishermen but also provides a form of social recognition for this profession;

27. Notes that, while European funding has been invested in teaching establishments and schools providing advanced vocational training and certification in the blue economy, its oldest sector of activity, fisheries, still has difficulty in gaining acceptance in such establishments, except under regional or national training or training programmes, in the absence of European recognition of training given;

28. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to establish common bases for a standard training and certification system for the various categories of fishermen, allowing rapid recognition at European level of the certification obtained in a given Member State; considers that this should include a procedure for the recognition of certificates obtained outside the Union compatible with the European training recognition system, facilitating the movement of fishermen within the EU;

29. Points out that, while the aim of the EMFAF is to contribute to the full implementation of the CFP, in order to achieve this objective, fishermen must be properly trained and certified, requiring a portion of the funding to be earmarked for the training and certification of existing and incoming EU fishermen;

Raising the profile of women and ensuring equal access to employment in this sector

30. Points out that, although the statistical data available indicate that women account for only 3% of those employed in productive fisheries activity, many vessels, in particular small-scale coastal fishing vessels, are operated as small family enterprises in which all necessary logistical and administrative support is provided on an informal basis by women not officially engaged in any other form of employment;

31. Points that such informal ancillary activity does not generate any pay, welfare or pension entitlements for the women concerned and that, should the operation of the vessels be suspended or terminated, only the officially recognised workforce is entitled to welfare benefits, thus increasing existing worker inequalities;

32. Points out that, despite the dangers of fishing activity, there is no reason to exclude or hamper access for women to this profession, as demonstrated by the increasing number of female crew members and skippers on working fishing vessels; observes that there are fortunately a number of particularly active associations representing women employed in the fisheries sector, especially in the regional advisory councils;

33. Notes that, while the role of women in the fisheries sector is frequently informal, they must be given economic and social recognition; points out that better information regarding their activities and measures to improve their status and heighten their profile will help to not only enhance their personal and social advancement, but also demystify their role in the fisheries sector;

34. Urges the European Commission and the Member States to implement measures to improve the qualifications of women involved in the blue economy, specially fisheries, and to promote official recognition of their contribution to fishing; considers it necessary, furthermore, to ensure that EMFAF funding within the 2021-2027 Community framework and beyond makes a significant contribution to equal treatment for women in the fisheries sector, being earmarked in particular for measures to improve their living, working and safety conditions on board fishing vessels and ensuring that the necessary changes are made to this end;

Promoting professional fishing activity and generational renewal in the sector

35. Recalls that the European Union, the largest single market in fisheries products, accounts for only 6% of total world catches, being highly dependent on fishery and aquaculture imports from third countries;

36. Points out that CFP standards are among the most stringent and make an important contribution to environmental, economic and social sustainability and that, although there is still much room for improvement, progress made in recent decades shows what can be done in this direction, contributing, on the one hand, to the sustainability of fish stocks and habitats and, on the other, to increasing the earnings of fishermen and shipowners;

37. Stresses the need to ensure the continuity of fishing activity, generational renewal and greater social recognition for this sector and its importance for the sustainable supply of healthy food for Europeans that come from environmentally sound habitats;

38. Stresses the significant contribution of fishermen to the advancement of scientific knowledge, through both their direct involvement in the collection of fishing data and the provision of additional information regarding the state of the marine environment, species and habitats and the conservation thereof;

39. Observes that, given the right training and specific skills, fishermen could contribute even more to the advancement of scientific knowledge through the in situ collection and registration of environmental data, providing verification of that obtained by remote observation using satellites and other instruments; in 2019, the Community fleet, consisting of over 81 000 fishing vessels of all sizes, provided an incomparable number of platforms constantly collecting fishing and other marine data on an almost daily basis; this is a facility that can and should be used for the collection of even more data regarding the seas of Europe and the world;

40. Points out that the involvement of young people and generational renewal will not only ensure the continuity of the oldest activity of the blue economy, but also keep younger generations better informed and more aware of sustainability issues and of the need for all to contribute to tackling and combating climate change, which is impacting hardest on sea and coastal areas around the planet;

41. Stresses the importance of ocean literacy, which must not exclude digital literacy and digitisation of fishing activity; despite improved skills among older users, software applications are easier and more intuitive for younger generations when it comes to collecting and registering data under the new Fisheries Control Regulation, which is currently under review, or utilising new applications and equipment to improve the safety, working conditions and wellbeing of fishermen at sea;

42. Points out that improvements in the conservation status of fish stocks have boosted fishermen’s productivity and average earnings, as well as achieving a reduction in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions; notes that fishermen have been increasingly involved in the collection of all marine refuse, including but not only lost or abandoned fishing gear, and that their ecological contribution in this respect should be recognised and encouraged;

43. Welcomes the proposals under discussion in connection with the 2021-2027 EMFAF to provide assistance and support for young fishermen engaged in the first purchase of a vessel or fishing enterprise; stresses the need to attract young people to not only sea fishing activities, but also fishing enterprise management, thereby ensuring generational renewal across the entire sector;

44. Points out that generational renewal, with an intake of fishermen who are well-trained and informed about the latest technologies, procedures and ways of ensuring the sustainability of resources, is also a way for the European Union to contribute to the global movement to combat, reduce and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing);

45. Points out that the need to improve on-board working, living and safety conditions, the difficulties regarding the recognition of fishery certificates, the obstacles to the movement of fishermen between Member States and the need for manpower in this sector are factors encouraging the arrival of third-country fishermen who are, in many cases, employed illegally;

46. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to raise public awareness in Europe of the importance of fishing activities and the contribution made by of fishermen to food supply in Europe and the conservation of oceans and marine life, thereby debunking the preconception that fishermen are predators interested only in exploiting resources with no thought for the future;

47. Notes the continued relevance of the question raised in the Bénodet 2000 report entitled 'Fish comes from the sea, but where will future fishermen come from?', which can be reformulated more elaborately two decades later as follows: 'Fish comes from the sea, and fishermen are guardians of fish and the sea, but how will we be able to replenish them and where will future fishermen come from?';

48. Concludes that generational renewal must take into account the objectives of the European Green Deal and the need to ensure digital transition in the blue economy also; this means not only attracting young people to fishing but also ensuring that they are informed and properly trained, offering them attractive career prospects and the opportunity to improve their personal situation and contribute to the cohesion of their local communities, especially in the most isolated coastal regions and with fewer job opportunities, enabling them to work for economic, social and environmental change in these areas, while enhancing the role of women in this sector through enhanced mobility and employment opportunities throughout the EU without difficulties or restrictions regarding recognition of their skills and training;

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

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The future of European fisheries faces a number of environmental, economic and social challenges. This proposed initiative report aims to address issues related to employment matters concerning fisheries, in particular with regard to the generational turnover of workers. The importance of fishing is undeniable, not only because it is one of the primary production sectors key to supplying food to an ever increasing growing global population, but also because of the percentage of the population that depends on it for their livelihood (between 10 and 12%, according to the FAO).

In the EU, official statistics on employment in the fisheries sector are not very detailed and do not provide a complete picture of how the age structure of the workforce has evolved. However, some data and indicators show that a sizeable proportion of workers in the sector are older, particularly in view of the job's physical requirements and the dangers involved. As a result, solutions need to be found to improve safety, working conditions and life on board vessels, training and job recognition, as well as to involve women and demystify the sector, which could improve its generational turnover.

Rapporteur's position

It is the rapporteur's view that there is a need to improve the statistical representation of jobs in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and in the rest of the value chain, particularly through an awareness of the level of training and age structure, and how this has evolved over time. Employment management, like fisheries management, will also need to be based on the best knowledge and information available. Only with up-to-date statistics will it be possible to identify situations where management measures must be modified and improved.

Only by ensuring better working conditions and habitability on board fishing vessels is it possible to attract young people to this line of work and improve safety for all. Despite the improvements already made, many accidents still occur during fishing at sea and, despite a reduction in the number of fatalities, the vast majority of accidents are caused by human error.

The rapporteur points out that although a number of reports and studies show that there is a need to establish criteria for training and recognition of uniform certification in the EU, this has still not taken place and is hampering the movement of labour between Member States. Generational turnover should also bring about an improvement in fishers' training and certification, and such training will have a positive impact not only on the safety of work on board but also on the environmental sustainability of the exploitation of resources.

The rapporteur stresses the importance of the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) in helping to overcome many of the obstacles encountered in attracting new generations to fishing, and emphasises that generational turnover contributes to the full implementation of the CFP in line with the fund's objectives.

Generational turnover will help to improve maritime and fisheries resources management, as it will be associated with more and better training for fishers. This training will create a workforce that is more attentive and open to implementing behavioural changes, such as the digital reporting of data, or being involved in the collection of more and better data on fishing and the environment. Finally, the rapporteur believes that the generational turnover of fishers will also demystify the profession for European citizens, as fishers should be seen as

guardians of the sea and its resources.