

Integrated maritime policy for the EU

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own-initiative report by Willi **PIECYK** (PES, DE) on an integrated maritime policy for the European Union, in response to a communication on this subject. While welcoming the Commission's communication, MEPs believe that, on the whole, the Action Plan includes **too few practical measures**. The Commission is called to be more ambitious in future in using the instruments at its disposal under the Treaties. MEPs also regret the fact that the Action Plan **addresses the challenges of climate change only in a non-binding way**: in their opinion, one task of the European maritime policy has to be to lay down, as a matter of urgency, the adjustment measures required, especially in view of the melting of glaciers leading to the rise in sea levels, together with the increased risk of flooding of ports and coastal regions. In this respect, they call for all relevant policies, and research policy in particular, to play their part.

The parliamentary committee reaffirms its call for maritime policy to make a substantial contribution to **reducing greenhouse gas emissions**, in particular by incorporating shipping into emissions trading and enhancing research efforts both with regard to exploiting the seas as a source of renewable energy and with a view to developing new, cleaner ship propulsion technologies. It calls emphatically on the Commission to be more ambitious in combating sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions, as well as solid waste from ships, and to cooperate more closely with the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) on this issue.

MEPs point out that **land-based pollution of the seas** constitutes a significant proportion of overall maritime pollution in Europe and indicate the absence of a solution to this issue from the Commission. They reiterate their call for the Commission to put forward an action plan to reduce such pollution, and ask Member States to act promptly to transpose the legislation in this field, such as the water framework directive. They also urge the Commission to help Member States to launch a plan to survey and map wrecked ships and submerged archaeological sites since these form part of the Community's historic and cultural heritage.

The report welcomes the Commission's stocktaking with regard to the exclusion of seafarers from a number of areas of European **social and labour protection rules**. MEPs propose that these directives be revised in close cooperation with the social partners. They urge those Member States which have not yet done so to ratify, as soon as possible, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, adopted with a view to improving the living and working conditions of seafarers and to preventing unfair competition in the shipping industry by updating and codifying the entire body of international labour standards in force.

In the **fishing sector**, the key objective of the maritime policy for the European Union should be to promote the modernisation and sustainable, balanced and fair development of the industry. MEPs believe that creating more and better seafaring jobs, particularly in the fishing industry, also depends on a guarantee of a fair and adequate income, proper working conditions (including health and safety) and access to training for people working in the industry. Member States are called to mutually recognise intermediate diplomas for the occupations of steersman and mechanic for fishing vessels.

The report emphatically supports the Commission's intention to exploit the potential of short sea shipping and inland waterway transport between the Member States and to integrate this rapidly into the single market. In addition, it welcomes the Commission's intention to speed up its proposals for a common maritime transport area together with a comprehensive maritime transport strategy for 2008-2018.

Lastly, MEPs support the proposal to establish an annual '**European Maritime Day**', which should be used to highlight the significance of maritime policy outside maritime circles, with the participation of ordinary citizens, schools, universities and non-governmental organisations.

