

Integrated maritime policy for the EU

2008/2009(INI) - 20/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 587 votes to 20, with 38 abstentions, a resolution on an integrated maritime policy for the European Union, in response to the Commission's communication on the subject.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Willi **PIECYK** (PES, DE) on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

While MEPs welcome the Commission's communication, they take the overall view that the Action Plan includes **too few practical measures**. The Commission is invited to be more ambitious in future in using the instruments at its disposal under the Treaties. MEPs 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 a European maritime policy has to be to lay down the adjustment measures required, as a matter of urgency, 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. As a result, they welcome the Commission's intention to put forward an Arctic Initiative and call on the scientific community and decision makers to further explore possibilities for protecting the polar ice caps.

The Resolution recalls that maritime policy must make a substantial contribution to **reducing greenhouse gas emissions**, notably by incorporating shipping into the emissions trading scheme and enhancing research efforts both with regard to exploiting the seas as a source of renewable energy and with a view to developing cleaner new 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 International Maritime Organization (IMO), which particularly concerns:

- introducing nitrogen oxide emission standards for ships using EU ports;
- designating the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the North-East Atlantic as Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECAs) under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention);
- reducing the maximum permitted sulphur content in marine fuels used in SECAs by passenger vessels from 1,5 % to 0,5 %;
- introducing fiscal measures, such as taxes or charges on sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from ships and identifying ways of imposing such measures and charges on all ships, regardless of flag, putting into Community ports or sailing within the waters of EU Member States;
- promoting the introduction of differentiated harbour and waterway charges to favour ships with low sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions;
- gradually introducing a requirement for ships at ports to use land-based electricity;
- proposing an EU directive on the quality of marine fuels.

MEPs point out that **land-based pollution** of the seas constitutes a significant proportion of overall maritime pollution and that the Commission has so far not got to grips with this issue. They reiterate their call for the Commission to put forward an action plan to reduce such pollution, and call for the Member States to act promptly to transpose the legislation in this field, such as the water framework Directive, into national law. 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 Resolution welcomes the Commission's stocktaking with regard to the exclusion of seafarers from a number of areas of European **social and labour protection rules** (e.g. collective redundancies, the

safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, the informing, consulting and posting of workers). 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 terms of **international piracy**, MEPs call upon the Commission and the Member States to actively support, in the framework of the UN and the IMO, the initiative promoted by several Member States, to extend the right of sea and air pursuit to the territorial waters of the coastal states, provided the countries concerned agree, as well as to develop a mechanism of mutual assistance against cases of maritime piracy. The Commission is called to set up a Community system for coordination and mutual assistance, which would allow naval vessels flying the flag of a Member State deployed in international waters, to protect fishing and merchant vessels from other Member States.

In the **fishing** sector, the key objective of the integrated maritime policy for the European Union should be to promote the modernisation and sustainable, balanced and fair development of the industry. MEPs are of the opinion 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 asked to work towards the mutual recognition of intermediate diplomas for the occupations of steersman and mechanic for fishing vessels.

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.