Blue growth - Enhancing sustainable growth in the EU's marine, maritime transport and tourism sectors

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Blue Growth: Enhancing sustainable growth in the EU’s marine, maritime transport and tourism sectors.

The resolution recalls that over 70% of the earth's surface is covered by oceans and seas which can play a crucial role in addressing the long-term challenges facing the EU, such as climate change and global competitiveness. Approximately half of Europe's population lives along the 89 000 kilometres of Europe's coastline, and it is therefore important that regional and local authorities take this demographic pressure into account when implementing public policies.

The adopted resolution is **Parliament’s roadmap for the further advancement of blue growth**. It seeks to revitalise the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP).

General framework: Parliament welcomes the Commission’s communication on Blue Growth which gives a clear indication of the potential of the maritime economy to create smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and **generates employment opportunities**. In addition, the coastal and maritime policy should be included in the general framework of the 2014-2020 programming period, also with a view to achieving the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy.

Members reiterate its support for the IMP and stresses that the promotion of this policy remains the primary means for enhancing blue growth. They consider that the Blue Growth Strategy, as part of the Integrated Maritime Policy, will encourage the development of synergies and coordinated policies, thus generating **European added value**.

Parliament considers that, in order to boost the competitiveness of the Union's maritime economic sectors in the global market, local, regional, national and European authorities must create the necessary conditions for sustainable growth, namely by establishing:

- maritime spatial planning systems,
- upgrading infrastructure,
- creating access to professional skills,
- securing funding (such as new rules for venture capital).

It stresses the importance of sharing information and best practices between the different levels of public authorities through the creation of a **specific EU platform**.

On **funding**, the resolution calls on the Member States to channel available financial instruments and European funding towards blue economy projects. It stresses the importance of taking into account the specific needs of the bailed-out Member States that are facing increased difficulty in undertaking high-cost projects, as well as those of the outermost and island regions, which present structural constraints due to their remoteness and natural characteristics.

Clusters: Members call on the EU and the Member States to give strong support to the creation of regional and crossborder maritime **clusters**. They stress the strategic importance of such clusters as

centres of excellence for economic activity related to blue growth and their ability to promote the sharing of knowledge and good practice, generate synergies between the various sectors of the blue economy, and help to attract investment.

Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management: Parliament welcomes the Commission's legislative proposal for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) as measures necessary for managing the increasing number of maritime and coastal activities and protecting the marine environment. It also notes that **MSP is expected to bring business costs down and improve the investment climate**, while **ICM will facilitate the coordination of activities** in the coastal zone and will bring about an overall improvement in the governance of this zone. A tailored approach is needed, so as to leave the Member States scope, when implementing EU maritime and coastal planning guidelines, for taking account of local specificities and needs in liaison with local authorities.

The resolution states that the **land-sea interface needs to be strengthened** in the context of spatial planning in order to safeguard continuity of human activities and of the supply chain and ensure that coastal areas are properly connected with their hinterland. This could help avoid the phenomenon of coasts being treated as borders.

The Commission is urged to help Member States launch plans to **map and survey wrecked ships** and submerged archaeological sites, which form an important part of the Union's historical and cultural heritage.

Maritime skills and employment: Members consider that overall employment in the blue economy may exceed the estimated number of 7 million jobs by 2020, if it is supported by **training policies** aimed at ensuring the presence of a mobile workforce with sufficient skills and experience. They reiterate their call for a significant improvement in working, health and safety conditions in the maritime professions and encourage the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts in this field in order to improve career security and make jobs in the blue economy and related sectors more attractive.

In this area, the Commission is called upon to:

- ensure that initiatives such as the 'EU Skills Panorama' reflect the needs of the blue economy;
- draw up an action plan to promote professions that are directly or indirectly linked to the blue economy;
- cooperate with the representatives of the maritime economic sector and training providers with a view to establishing and funding **European Sector Councils on Employment and Skills**, in order to register jobs, changes in skills required and related training needs;
- develop an **initiative to encourage the mobility of research staff, especially in coastal areas**, with specific reference to the areas of tourism, energy and biotechnology, along the lines of Erasmus, to be implemented as a priority during low tourist seasons in order to balance, in a sustainable manner, the flows of people in increasingly sensitive ecosystems.

Research and innovation: Members recall the EU's world-class research capacity in maritime fields. It calls on the Commission to update its European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research by 2014 and provide adequate long-term environmental monitoring and conduct research on **early warning systems.**

Members recognise that **blue biotechnology** has the potential to create high-skilled employment and has much to offer in critical areas such as health, nutrition and innovation. They welcome the Commission's intention to support the research and innovation needed to promote this activity in the field of entrepreneurship.

Shipping and shipbuilding: Parliament notes with concern that shipping within the EU continues to be hampered by **administrative and customs red tape** which prevents growth in the industry, especially in maritime cabotage and motorways of the sea. A **uniform set of rules for intra-Union shipping needs to be developed** as it is crucial to ensuring the free movement of goods and persons in EU waters.

Members call on the Commission to make the necessary **legislative proposals for the creation of the Blue Belt**, including the necessary revision of the EU Customs Code, before the end of 2013.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to significantly step up their efforts to reach an **international agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from maritime transport**, taking into account the growing impact of greenhouse gas emissions from ships. The resolution points out that eco-friendly fuels such as **LNG** can play an important role in achieving the target of reducing the EU's CO2 emissions from maritime bunker fuels by at least 40% by 2050.

The Council is urged to reach an agreement with Parliament to adopt a regulation providing for vessels to be **dismantled** in a way that respects the environment and the workers' working conditions.

Maritime and coastal tourism: the resolution calls on the Member States to support initiatives to develop and upgrade sustainable tourism infrastructure, in particular to promote new forms of tourism, such as eco-agro-fishing and sustainable water sports. The importance of yachting and sailing for maritime tourism is also.

Blue energy: the resolution notes that climate change is one of the main threats to marine biodiversity worldwide, and that the energy aspects of a blue growth strategy must be based on renewable energies and energy efficiency. The Commission is called upon to adopt an integrated approach to the development of marine energy resources, by exploiting synergies between offshore wind energy and other forms of renewable marine energy.

Fisheries and aquaculture: Members acknowledge that protecting Europe’s maritime borders is a challenge for Member States and consider that a successful blue economy requires **secure EU maritime borders**, with a view to ensuring the protection of the marine environment, fisheries controls, the fight against **illegal fishing** and law enforcement. A **European coastguard** should be set up to coordinate operations and surveillance at sea.