Management of the fishing fleets in the outermost regions

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Ulrike RODUST (S&D, DE) on the management of the fishing fleets in the Outermost Regions (ORs).

As a reminder, the outermost regions include nine EU regions, which are part of France (Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin), Portugal (Madeira and Azores) and Spain (Canary Islands).

Specificities of the ORs: Members considered that the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), designed to tackle the problems and challenges of continental Europe, can only provide a limited response to the specific characteristics of fisheries in the ORs. They called, therefore, for the **development of a strategy for each regional sea basin** tailored to the specific situation of each of the outermost regions.

Stressing the presence in the ORs of a wide variety of small communities that are highly dependent on **traditional, coastal and small-scale fishing**, the report called for the need to:

- involve local fisheries in achieving food security for local communities;
- protect **marine biological resources** around the ORs;
- strengthen support for relevant **scientific research projects** given that the OR seabed is a veritable living laboratory of biodiversity;
- maintain the balance **between fishing capacity and opportunities** in accordance with the precautionary principle and taking into account socio-economic realities.

Members observed the difficulty, or even impossibility, for certain fishermen in the ORs to access credit and/or insurance for their vessels, causing **safety problems** and economic constraints for these fishermen.

Making better use of possibilities provided under Article 349 of the Treaty and the CFP: Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union comprises the specific features of ORs. These include remoteness, insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate, and economic dependence on a few products.

Members called for the **full application of Article 349 TFEU** in the European Union's policies, regulations, funds and programmes relating to fisheries, particularly in the EMFF, in order to respond to the specific difficulties encountered by the ORs.

The report recommended, *inter alia*:

- setting up a separate Advisory Council for the ORs;
- better use of the possibilities provided for in the EMFF to support this kind of local development in the ORs;
- establishing fisheries local action groups (FLAGs), which are recognised to be an important channel for support and for opportunities to diversify fishing activities;
- stepping up the fight against **illegal, unreported and unregulated** (IUU) **fishing** undertaken in the EEZ of certain ORs;

- speeding up the implementation of the EMFF and to use the opportunities it provides to **invest heavily in fleet modernisation** – improvements to safety, on-board hygiene, energy efficiency and quality of fishery products – as well as in fishing ports, landing sites and aquaculture, in order to generate new market outlets;
- paying particular attention to the interests of ORs when **fisheries agreements** are concluded with third countries;
- continue with **specific aid schemes** such as special taxation models;
- improving **data collection** on stocks and the assessment of the impact of small-scale vessels in the ORs;
- providing support to aquaculture development projects;
- that the aid intensity for **engine replacement** in the ORs should be increased where scientific evidence indicates that climate conditions and climate change have a decisive negative impact on the ORs' fleets.

The Commission is invited to look into the possibility of establishing an **instrument** specifically dedicated to supporting fisheries in the ORs, along the lines of the POSEI scheme for agriculture in the ORs.