Role of fisheries-related tourism in the diversification of fisheries

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The European Parliament adopted by 599 votes to 33, with 67 abstentions, a resolution on the role of fisheries-related tourism in the diversification of fisheries.

The resolution noted that most coastal and island regions are suffering severe economic decline. **Fisheries-related tourism** can help to create jobs, promote social inclusion and revitalise communities that depend on fishing. However, there is no common definition of fisheries-related tourism, nor is there any legal basis.

Members considered it essential to **redesign and adapt fishing vessels** for tourist activities. They highlighted the as yet untapped potential of fishing-related tourism and stated that fishing tourism at sea, and shore-based tourist services offered by fishermen, can complement commercial fishing and provide an **additional income** for fishing communities.

The strategic goal of the Commission initiative shall be to promote fishing tour activities, shore-based tourist services offered by fishermen, and sport fishing-related tourism throughout the EU.

Infrastructure: the resolution noted that **investments at national, regional and local level** are needed in order to provide the necessary infrastructure from better internet connectivity to building new and better transport infrastructure and tourism services roads ensuring good access to remote fishing villages, to renewing maritime and fishing facilities, while at the same time ensuring that it is being done in a sustainable and environment friendly way.

More specifically, the Commission is called upon to:

- **harmonise the definition** of tourism-related fishing activities at Union level, with particular emphasis on fishing tours, shore-based tourist services offered by fishermen, aquaculture-related tourism, and tourism related to sport/recreational fishing;
- foster the establishment and development of fishing tourism, with the aim of applying a **differentiated business strategy** that is appropriate to the potential of this segment and able to meet its needs more effectively;
- promote and support investment in fisheries in the area of tourism with a view to diversifying fisheries in cultural and artistic terms, as part of the traditional heritage;
- set up a **European tourism fishing network**, and a European network for tourist services related to sport/recreational fishing, following the highly successful example of FARNET, which offers considerable help to FLAGs;
- stress the importance of monitoring the real impact of recreational fishing as an economic activity;
- adopt **common rules on navigation safety**, health and hygiene requirements for vessels used to carry out fishing tourism activities, and possible tax concessions, with the proviso that the aforementioned measures are sufficiently flexible to accommodate major differences in terms of individual fisheries and fishing vessels, and allow for distinctive regional characteristics;
- promote the involvement of fisheries and fishery workers also in **projects relating to cultural and heritage tourism**, such as the rediscovery of seafaring activities and traditional fishing grounds and occupations.

The resolution also suggested:

- **organising language training** for fishermen in order to provide them with the necessary knowledge to welcome tourists and guarantee their safety and to promote information on marine biology, local fish species, environment and cultural traditions;
- **promoting cooperation** between research institutes, museums, tourism companies, managers of Natura 2000 sites in order for them to work together to develop sustainable innovative products.

Seasonality: Member States are called upon to adopt strategies to overcome the problem of seasonality affecting tourist activities. A balanced mix of alternative and targeted tourism products, and the appropriate promotion and marketing of those products, can help in balancing the problems of seasonality.

Funding: Parliament called for the earmarking of the funding needed to establish a **European network for the exchange of best practices**, and for the mapping of fishing activities with information regarding points of interest and the characteristics of each fishing community. It encouraged the Member States and the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) to make the **best use of the available funds**, and also to make use, where possible, of multi-funding (jointly with the ERDF, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) or the ESF).