State of play of recreational fisheries in the European Union

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Norica NICOLAI (ALDE, RO) on the state of recreational fisheries in the European Union.

The estimated number of those practising marine recreational fishing in Europe stands at between **8.7 and 9 million people**, or 1.6 % of the European population. Recreational fishing is a hobby, but the economic, social and environmental importance of this activity, are factors that show how important this activity is and should thus be taken into consideration and analysed when considering future regulations.

Furthermore, the **UK's withdrawal** from the Union should be taken into consideration for the future management of maritime recreational fisheries, in view of the importance of this activity in the UK and its significance for shared fish stocks.

Improving data collection: the report stressed the importance of collecting sufficient data on recreational fisheries, and on maritime recreational fisheries in particular, in order to **properly evaluate the total fishing mortality levels for all stocks**. Data should be collected on the number of recreational fishermen, the volume of their catches and the added value which they generate in coastal communities.

The Commission is urged to evaluate and, if necessary, **expand data collection** for recreational fisheries in order to encompass more fish stocks and other marine organisms, to draw up a feasibility study on the uniform collection of data relating to its socio-economic impact and to make the collection of such data mandatory.

It is also urged to conduct an impact assessment on recreational fishing in the EU and to finance monitoring projects for the species that are the most vulnerable to recreational fishing.

The Commission should **extend the scope of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund** (EMFF) to financially support research and analysis of the data collected.

Respect for the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP): Members highlighted the fact that Member States should ensure that recreational fishing activities are sustainable and respect the objectives of the CFP. They emphasized the need to protect the **artisanal fleet** and to ensure its survival and generational replacement in the face of the expansion of recreational activity linked to recreational ports and seasonal tourism.

Common definition: the report called on the Commission to propose a uniform definition for recreational fishing at EU level that clearly differentiates recreational from commercial and semi-substance fisheries, based on the principle that recreational catches should never be sold.

Members also highlighted the need to lay down **basic rules for the management of recreational fishing** and suggested that a catalogue of recreational fishing activities, which should include information about fishing gear and operations and a description of fishing areas, target species and by-catches, should also be drawn up.

Lastly, Members urged the Commission to support, **including financially**, the development of recreational fishing in the tourism sector, as an important factor in the development of the blue economy in small communities, coastal communities and islands, particularly in the outermost regions.