

# Fishers for the future: Attracting a new generation of labour to the fishing industry and generating employment in coastal communities

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Manuel PIZARRO (S&D, PT) on 'Fishers for the future: Attracting a new generation of workers to the fishing industry and generating employment in coastal communities'.

Fishing, including aquaculture, is an important source of employment and income for the livelihoods of 10-12% of the world's population, according to the FAO. An estimated 140 million additional jobs are related to the rest of the fisheries value chain, in particular the processing and sale of fisheries products. The latest Eurostat data indicate that the EU fishing industry employed a total of about 180 000 people in 2017, of which about one third were employed in the aquaculture sub-sector.

This own-initiative report aims to address employment issues in the fisheries sector, including the generational renewal of fishermen. It makes the following recommendations:

## *Improving information and profiling of the active population in the fisheries sector*

The report suggested improving the **statistical representation** of jobs in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and in the rest of the value chain, in particular to determine the level of training and the age pyramid and its evolution over time.

With a view to implementing one of the three sustainability pillars advocated under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), namely the social pillar, Members reiterated that **better scientific knowledge**, based on reliable, up-to-date data collected in a harmonised manner and in all Member States, is essential for managing and monitoring the social developments in the sector, in particular employment.

## *Better working and living conditions on board to improve safety*

Although safety conditions on board have improved, particularly on larger vessels, the number of incidents and accidents recorded by EMSA in 2018 increased by 40% compared to the previous year, although the number of fatalities is tending to decrease.

The report stressed that improving the living standards of fishermen, including through **better working and safety conditions**, is one of the elements that will promote employment and the development of coastal communities, attract young people and ensure the generational renewal that is essential for the survival of this activity. Members urged the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the best safety, work and living standards are in place on fishing vessels, regardless of their size.

Member States are urged to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention C188 to ensure a **level playing field among fishing companies across the world**, especially given the international dimension of the fishing industry. Members also stressed the need to take account of the arduous nature of fishermen's work, for example by guaranteeing the right to retire earlier than the average worker without being penalised for it.

## *Improving training and ensuring that it is recognised at EU level*

The report stressed the need for harmonisation and type approval of nautical and fisheries training requirements and procedures at EU level, as well as embarkation procedures and requirements. It stressed the need for **type approval of these systems** at EU level and to align them with the requirements of the STCW and STCW-F Conventions.

Members pointed out that **mutual recognition of qualifications and maritime safety certificates** within the EU will increase staff mobility and make the maritime professions more attractive to young generations. Member States are invited to establish common bases for standard training and certification system for the various categories of fishers, allowing rapid recognition at European level of the certification obtained in a given Member State.

### ***Ensuring gender equality in access and employment in this sector***

Although the statistical data available indicates that women account for only 12 % of those employed in productive fisheries activity, many vessels, in particular small-scale coastal fishing vessels, are in many cases operated as small family enterprises in which all necessary logistical and administrative support is provided on an informal basis by women not officially engaged in any other form of employment.

Members considered that the role of women in the fisheries sector must be recognised, properly remunerated and taken into account economically and socially. They called on the Commission to launch initiatives to recognise the work of women in the fisheries sector and to ensure **equal pay** between genders.

### ***Promoting professional fishing activity and generational renewal in the sector***

The report stressed the need to ensure the continuity of fishing activity, generational renewal and **greater social recognition** for this sector and its importance for the sustainable supply of healthy food for Europeans that come from environmentally sound habitats. According to Members, promoting high standards in terms of the environmental sustainability of the fisheries sector is key to attracting a new generation of fishers and providing long-term economic stability for the sector.

Members noted that this training will create a workforce that is more attentive and open to implementing behavioural changes, such as the digital reporting of data, or being involved in the collection of more and better data on fishing and the environment.

The report welcomed the fact that the new [2021-2027 EMFAF](#) will provide assistance and support for young fishers engaged in the first purchase of a vessel or fishing enterprise; stresses the need to attract young people not only to sea fishing activities, but also to fishing enterprise management and aquaculture, thereby ensuring generational renewal across the entire sector.