

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

2019/2161(INI) - 16/09/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 650 votes to 17, with 20 abstentions, a resolution on ‘Fishers for the future: Attracting a new generation of workers to the fishing industry and generating employment in coastal communities’.

The public health crisis and trade and market disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have hit fishers across Europe. As vital professionals, the EU institutions should pay special attention to them, not only for their role, but also for the importance for the Union’s food security. The EU fishing industry employed a total of around 180 000 people in 2017, of which about a third were employed in the aquaculture sub-sector.

Parliament made recommendations to address employment issues in the fisheries sector, including the generational renewal of the fisheries sector:

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

Parliament 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.

Parliament 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.

Recalling that maritime workers are often excluded from the scope of EU and Member State labour law, Members called for a **number of basic premises related to employment regulations** are provided to fishers, taking into account the specificities of the inshore and small-scale sector. They called on all Member States to ratify the Torremolinos Convention (1977) as well as ILO Convention C188 in order to ensure a level playing field between fishing companies worldwide.

Improving training and ensuring that it is recognised at EU level

The resolution 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

Parliament encouraged the creation of an **association of young European fishers** to promote generational renewal of the fisheries sector and to represent and bring together young fishers and their organisations throughout the Union. Members also felt that the role of **women** in the fisheries sector, although often informal, should be recognised, properly remunerated and taken into account economically and socially. They called on the Commission to launch initiatives to this end.

Promoting professional fishing activity and generational renewal in the sector

Parliament 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.

Parliament 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.