Decarbonisation and modernisation of EU fisheries, and the development and deployment of fishing gear

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The European Parliament adopted by 450 votes to 93, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on the decarbonisation and modernisation of EU fisheries, and the development and deployment of fishing gear.

Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 requires an ambitious, socio-economically just, inclusive and sustainable transition of the EU fisheries sector, based on a balance between environmental protection, social justice and economic viability, and supported by public investment and innovation.

Decarbonisation and energy transition

Parliament stressed the need for a **realistic and progressive roadmap** for decarbonisation, based on the best available scientific knowledge and data, which combines technological developments, logistical improvements, the availability of alternative fuels and legislative timelines to ensure feasible and effective implementation across all fleet segments.

To achieve an inclusive and just transition, structural barriers to access must be removed, including high entry costs, lack of training, and inadequate port infrastructure. A **one-size-fits-all approach** is therefore not appropriate for the diversity of fleets, regions, and socioeconomic contexts within the EU.

Furthermore, there are significant constraints and obstacles to investment in modernisation, energy efficiency, and sustainability within the EU fleet. The resolution therefore emphasised that consideration must be given not only to modernisation, but also to the possibilities of vessel renewal, considering the fleet’s high average age of 31.5 years, in order to achieve the EU’s decarbonisation objectives.

Members proposed to promote the stimulation of **ship renewal schemes** in cooperation with private actors, with the support of national and Union funding to facilitate fleet renewal with more modern, safe and environmentally friendly vessels.

Deploring the fact that current financial incentives are insufficient to meet the sector's needs, Parliament argued that **new financial leverage mechanisms** must be developed and implemented. It called on the Commission to establish sufficient **additional financing instruments** beyond the EMFAF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund), including innovative financing models, to support the sector's massive investment needs for decarbonisation and the energy transition. It recommended that the Commission **support research** in vessel design.

The resolution stressed that the energy transition must be inclusive and accessible to all segments of the sector and must therefore be fully addressed when developing Union policies, particularly regarding **small-scale** and artisanal fishers.

Members stressed the need for appropriate support and investment to **avoid rising fuel costs** and believe that no EU-level fuel taxation rules should be introduced for the EU fishing fleet. In this context, they emphasised the importance of measures to stimulate demand for sustainable marine fuels.

Parliament called for the CFP to be fully implemented to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture activities are managed in a fair way, generate socio-economic benefits, contribute to the availability of food products and minimise the impact of their activities on habitats and marine ecosystems, while restoring and maintaining populations of harvested species above levels that produce maximum sustainable yield.

Members drew attention to the need to offer a sustainable future to coastal businesses and communities, and to establish a **new strategic pact** between the EU and the fisheries and aquaculture sector. They also stressed that the geographical remoteness, insularity, and small size of the **outermost regions** necessitate a differentiated approach to decarbonising their fisheries sectors. It is therefore necessary to adapt the eligibility criteria and investment priorities under the EMFAF and other EU instruments to take into account the structural constraints and environmental vulnerabilities of the outermost regions.

The resolution suggested that the Commission **review the carbon and environmental impacts** of all fisheries and aquaculture imports to prevent an unlevel playing field with global competitors that are not subject to similarly stringent regulatory frameworks or equivalent environmental, health and social standards.

Modernisation

Parliament stressed that the modernisation of the EU fishing fleet is a key component of the transition towards a more sustainable and resilient sector and should address both technological and human challenges, ensuring that energy efficiency, digital capacity and operational safety are pursued hand in hand with the improvement of working conditions on board.

Members called for **public support** to prioritise vessel upgrades that deliver both environmental gains and social progress and enhanced capacity for proper on-board conservation of catches, including cold storage and preservation systems, within national capacity ceilings. They called on Member States to use EU and national financial support to prioritise modernisation strategies that **strengthen the long-term sustainability of fishing enterprises**, promote local value chains and ensure that fishers can continue to operate under fair, predictable and economically viable conditions.

Parliament reaffirmed that **generational renewal** should go hand in hand with the objectives of the European Green Deal and with the need to ensure the digital transition within the blue economy. It also underlined the need to strengthen the role of **women** in this sector.

The resolution called for the creation of a **dedicated emergency fund** to accelerate fleet renewal, thus enabling a realistic transition to clean energy technologies.

Development and deployment of fishing gear

Parliament stressed the **need for targeted public and private investment and regulatory support** to promote the development, testing, and widespread use of fishing gear that improves both ecological outcomes and the operational viability of sustainable fleets. It called on the Commission to support innovation by investing in increasing the selectivity of fishing gear, improving port infrastructure, and modernising fishing vessels to improve health, safety, and working conditions, increase energy efficiency, reduce emissions, and enhance the quality of catches.