The impact of the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive 2014/89/EU on fisheries in selected fishing areas and sea basins

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The European Parliament adopted by 518 votes to 31, with 102 abstentions, a resolution on the impact of the implementation of Directive 2014/89/EU, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, on fisheries in selected fishing areas and sea basins.

Implementation of Directive 2014/89/EU and its impact on fisheries and aquaculture

Parliament highlighted the fact that while the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive provides a relevant cross-sectoral framework for cooperation, **its implementation is uneven** across Member States.

Indeed, implementation is often hampered by institutional segmentation, fragmented governance, inadequate legal mechanisms, and insufficient financial and human resources dedicated to and accessing these mechanisms.

Moreover, the implementation and effectiveness of maritime spatial planning vary greatly across EU maritime regions, with some (such as the Baltic Sea and the North Sea) being largely covered by plans resulting from maritime spatial plans, while others (such as the Mediterranean Sea) are considerably less so.

Cross-border initiatives remain limited and effective coordination is lacking, hampering efforts to address the challenges shared by interconnected marine regions. Members deplored the difficulties in cooperation between Member States and non-EU countries, particularly neighbouring coastal states, on maritime spatial planning.

Benefits of marine spatial planning for fisheries and aquaculture

Deploring the fact that the current legal framework for maritime spatial planning has not satisfactorily delivered the expected benefits for fisheries, Members stressed the need for a **coherent and effective implementation** of EU maritime policy.

The resolution emphasised the need for a **comprehensive socio-economic analysis** which incorporates the viewpoints of small businesses and coastal communities. Maritime spatial planning must **better integrate fisheries and aquaculture**, address spatial issues affecting fisheries, including the cumulative effects of offshore renewable energy, marine protected areas, shipping, and defence zones, and prevent the progressive marginalisation of fishing activities. Furthermore, **offshore wind farms** should, where possible, be placed in areas less suitable for fishing, in order to minimise negative impacts on fisheries operations.

Member States are invited to take into consideration **the impact of offshore renewable energy** on the marine ecosystem and fisheries when determining their energy mix.

Emphasising the essential role of **small-scale fishing**, such as in local employment, social cohesion and the preservation of traditional skills, Members called for maritime spatial planning to take this segment fully into account.

Stakeholder participation and data collection

Parliament noted that while stakeholder and coastal community participation in maritime spatial planning has improved, it remains **constrained**. The lack of binding provisions for Member States in this area hinders the participation of relevant parties - such as fishermen, aquaculture workers, interest groups, and concerned citizens - in consultation and decision-making processes. Members also deplored the **lack of harmonised and comparable data** on the state of the ocean and seas, fisheries resources, and the impacts of climate change, as well as the lack of appropriate economic and social data.

Recommendations

Parliament recommended an ambitious reform of maritime spatial planning, emphasising, *inter alia*, the following points:

- the need for a **more comprehensive approach** and better coordination between the relevant legislative acts of the EU, in order to ensure a consistent and effective application of maritime spatial planning;

- maritime spatial plans should better reflect **spatial, environmental and socio-economic needs**, as well as the specific characteristics of each maritime basin, including the connected exclusive economic zones;

- Member States should strengthen their **coordination** both among themselves and within themselves, in the design and implementation of plans resulting from maritime spatial planning, in order to ensure a coherent, integrated and ecosystem-based approach;

- better anchor the strategic importance of **food security** in the future revision of the directive on maritime spatial planning and better take into account the **fisheries and aquaculture sectors** as a priority when planning maritime spatial;

- adopt a dynamic approach that facilitates adaptation, taking into account the changes of the marine environment and marine resources, using regularly updated scientific and socio-economic data and indicators, in particular when establishing areas likely to exclude fisheries activities such as **offshore wind farms** and the designation of certain marine protected areas;

- strengthen **support for fishing** by systematically taking this activity into account, and increase the number of reserved areas dedicated to small-scale low-impact inshore fishing within the 12 nautical mile zone;

- propose a **mechanism of compensatory measures** or insurance schemes for the fisheries sector when its activities are displaced by alternative uses of the sea;

- ensure that the development, implementation and review of maritime spatial planning plans are systematically accompanied **by social and territorial impact assessments** focusing in particular on employment, working conditions, the safety of fishers and the sustainability of coastal communities;

- integrate **climate change** mitigation and adaptation measures into maritime spatial planning;

- support a more **cross-border** and basin-based approach to maritime spatial planning and to strengthen cooperation in maritime spatial planning between the EU, its Member States and third countries.