Fishing: safety and the causes of accidents

2000/2028(INI) - 06/03/2001

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Rosa MIGUÉLEZ RAMOS (PES, E) on "Fisheries: safety and causes of accidents". The report relayed the alarm call sounded by the International Labour Office, which put the annual worldwide number of deaths of sea-fishermen at 24,000 in 1997, with the number of non-fatal accidents at 24 million. The committee pointed out that safety and working conditions needed to be improved and called on those Member States which had not yet done so to ratify the relevant recommendations of the International Labour Organisation and the conventions of the International Maritime Organisation. It also called on the Commission to draw up proposals to fill the gap in Community law on health and safety in the fisheries industry, given that the two directives on minimum health and safety requirements and a harmonised safety regime for certain fishing vessels applied only to 8% and 3% respectively of vessels in the European fishing fleet. The report also insisted on the need for inspections to enforce on-board health and safety measures and said that, to improve the plight of fishermen, greater use could be made of existing EU legislation, such as the directive on the organisation of working hours and the framework directive on measures to improve the health and safety of workers. The committee also felt that a culture of safety needed to be fostered throughout the industry, as well as improved professional training. In this connection it criticised the emergence of hazards caused by the spread of flags of convenience. Basic safety training for all crewmembers on EU fishing vessels should be made mandatory and the overall standard of fisheries training qualifications should be enhanced. The Commission was urged to include the social aspects, in particular those relating to safety and working conditions, in its Green Paper on the reform of the common fisheries policy for 2002. The committee also called for a gradual ban on vessels older than 20 years and for the Commission to continue co-financing the replacement of such vessels. Other points raised by the report included the need for greater coordination between maritime communications centres and services and between European radio-medical centres in order to improve techniques for radio diagnosis and telemedicine as well as sea rescue.