Inshore fishing and the problems encountered by inshore fishermen

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Seán Ó NEACHTAIN (UEN, IRL) on inshore fishing and the problems encountered by inshore fishermen. The report underlined the sector's "vital contribution" not only to local economies but also to maintaining the social fabric of coastal communities and preserving cultural traditions and practices. It added that inshore fisheries "can and must" play a constructive role in the protection and conservation of the coastal marine environment.

The committee called for the creation of minimum criteria for a common definition at EU level of inshore fisheries, taking account of aspects such as the length of vessels, the distance from the home port within which the vessels operate, the maximum length of time during which the vessel is away from home, the fact of vessels returning to port daily and selling their catch fresh, etc. The Commission was urged to propose ways of harmonising data on inshore fisheries throughout the EU with a view to establishing a common definition.

Among other recommendations, the report called on the Commission to finance the modernisation of inshore fishery vessels, bring forward specific educational and training programmes, "so as to encourage the entry of young professionals into the sector" and ensure that any new inshore fisheries legislation pays special attention to establishing and maintaining a "safety culture". It also wanted to see greater recognition of the role of women in the inshore fisheries sector and ensure that their economic and social rights were guaranteed. Lastly, the committee said that it was essential for inshore fishermen and dependent communities to be more directly involved in processing and trading in order to strengthen their profit base and improve their living standards. And it reiterated Parliament's traditional position that the Commission should consult with the sector and ensure that it is actively involved "at the appropriate policy level in the decision-making process", with the Regional Advisory Councils playing an essential role in this context.