Basic information

2006/2174(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Thematic strategy on the marine environment **Subject** 3.15.01 Fish stocks, conservation of fishery resources 3.70.01 Protection of natural resources: fauna, flora, nature, wildlife, countryside; biodiversity 3.70.05 Marine and coastal pollution, pollution from ships, oil pollution	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	KUŠĶIS Aldis (PPE-DE)	29/11/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
TRAN Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH Fisheries	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Environment	2757	2006-10-23

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	DIMAS Stavros

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
24/10/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0504	Summary
06/07/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/10/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
17/10/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0364/2006	

23/10/2006	Debate in Council		Summary
13/11/2006	Debate in Parliament		
14/11/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0486/2006	Summary
14/11/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/11/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2174(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33975

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE374.344	21/06/2006	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE378.596	18/09/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0364/2006	17/10/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0486/2006	14/11/2006	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2005)0504 	24/10/2005	Summary

Thematic strategy on the marine environment

2006/2174(INI) - 14/11/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 573 votes in favour to 8 against with 13 abstentions, a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Aldis **Kušķis** (EPP-ED, LV) and welcomed the Commission's Thematic Strategy. It felt, however, that the proposal for a Marine Strategy Directive in its present form would not succeed in mobilising the regional and local authorities to take the appropriate measures. It called for the inclusion of a common EU-wide definition of good environmental status (GES) in the Marine Strategy Directive. This should be understood as the environmental status when all the marine ecosystems within a given Marine Region are managed in ways which allow them to function in a balanced, self-sustaining way in the face of environmental change, supporting both biodiversity and human activities. The Marine Strategy Directive must include a legal obligation for Member States to achieve GES, and must also result in binding supranational obligations which might involve common commitments in third countries. In addition, it was important that the objectives, measures, language and concepts used in the Marine Strategy Directive and other directives concerning the marine environment, such as the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive, be harmonised to facilitate coordination between those directives. Parliament emphasised the need to bring the timetable into line with the timetable for the Water Framework

Directive. Parliament went on to welcome the Green Paper "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union" (COM (2006)0275) but warned against too great an emphasis on an economic approach, instead urging a balance between the economic and ecological angles.

Turning to budgetary matters, Parliament expressed concern over the lack of financial commitment for the implementation of the Marine Strategies, and asked the Commission and Member States to identify the measures that could be co-financed through Life+ due to their particular importance for the achievement of GES in the European marine waters. It also advocated coordinating the timetable for the marine strategy with the next programming period for the EU's agricultural fund (from 2014). This would be of particular importance for those regions in which agriculture accounted for a substantial proportion of the discharges into the marine area.

On data sharing, a new approach to marine assessment was recommended, based upon existing programmes including the Data Collection Regulation under the CFP, and tailored to ensure full consistency with new Commission initiatives on spatial data infrastructure and GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security), in particular the marine services.

Parliament welcomed the excellent contributions to marine protection of a number of regional marine conventions and expected them to become a key partner in delivering the Marine Strategy Directive. In order to avoid a double bureaucratic burden on the effective delivery of the Marine Strategy Directive, the Commission and Member States were asked to ensure that the regional marine conventions had the relevant administrative capacities or that mechanisms for joint implementation of the Strategy were developed. In either case, this must include the widest possible cross-sectoral and stakeholder involvement. Parliament asked the Commission to study the possibility of making the Baltic Sea into a pilot area, in view of the fact that it was an especially sensitive sea area. The Member States surrounding it were likely to agree on faster implementation of the plans through the work within the Helsinki Commission.

Parliament moved on to point out the fragility of other marine waters:

- the protection of the Mediterranean sea lacked either the necessary environmental legislation or, where such legislation does exist, the political willingness to enforce it;

- the Commission must propose relevant measures for the protection of the Arctic waters, and support programmes on the rights and needs of indigenous peoples in tackling sustainable use of the Arctic's natural resources;

- the Black Sea was recommended for inclusion as one of the Marine Regions to be covered by the Marine Strategy Directive;

- there was no environmental guarantee in connection with the construction of the North European gas pipeline to prevent a potential environmental disaster in the Baltic Sea region.

In all cases, there should be prior consultation of adjoining countries and other countries concerned where projects may have an impact on the common environment, even when the project is carried out in international waters. Experience showed that environmental impact assessments often had shortcomings and that they were not carried out in consultation with other States. Parliament urged the Council to act at international level to develop mandatory environmental impact assessments in relations between the EU and third countries.

It should be noted that this report is relevant to the amendments adopted in the Marine Strategy Directive (please refer to COD/2005/0211.)

Thematic strategy on the marine environment

2006/2174(INI) - 23/10/2006

The Council held a policy debate on the thematic strategy and proposal for a Framework Directive for the protection and conservation of the marine environment.

The debate focused essentially on the following issues:

- in general, the Council considered that the marine strategy, together with the proposal for a Directive, provides adequate tools to meet the marine environment related objectives set out in the 6th Environmental Action Programme while setting up the environmental pillar of a future EU Maritime Policy;

- in their majority, delegations agreed that the Directive should include an explicit definition of the concept of "good environmental status" (GES) and indicated some of the main elements they considered should be included in such a definition to make it operational. Delegations were of the view that some flexibility with regard to the timetable might be required, depending on how GES would be defined as well as on specific regional and sub-regional circumstances;

- the need to ensure coherence between the different levels of regulation was stressed. The work done and obligations under international agreements, such as the Regional Seas Conventions, must be taken into account to avoid overlaps and duplication of work. The strategy and proposed Directive must be coherent with other EC legislation and policies, such as the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Common Fisheries Policy;

- lastly, it was recognised that the specific situation of landlocked countries will have to be addressed when implementing the Directive, although these countries do have a contribution to make to its objectives.

Thematic strategy on the marine environment

2006/2174(INI) - 24/10/2005 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : presentation of a thematic strategy on the protection and conservation of the marine environment.

CONTEXT : Oceans and seas provide 99% of the available living space on the planet, cover 71% of the Earth's surface and contain 90% of the biosphere and consequently contain more biological diversity than terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. Marine ecosystems play a key role in climate and weather patterns. Indispensable to life itself, the marine environment is also a great contributor to economic prosperity, social well-being and quality of life.

However, the marine environment is under significant pressure. The pace of degradation of its biodiversity, the level of contamination by dangerous substances and the emerging consequences of climate change are some of the most visible warning signals. The current deterioration of the marine environment and the associated erosion of its ecological capital jeopardises the generation of wealth and employment opportunities derived from Europe's oceans and seas. If not addressed, this will undermine the capacity of the EU maritime cluster to make a strong contribution to the Lisbon agenda.

Economic activities that directly depend on the quality of the marine environment would be particularly affected. The key sector of tourism would be severely hit. As regards fisheries, the loss of income from over-fishing of cod alone in the North Sea and Baltic Sea was estimated to reach EUR 400 million in 2002.

The development of a Thematic Strategy for the protection and conservation of the marine environment is a result of the commitment EU's 6th Environment Action Programme. While the Strategy is primarily focused on the protection of the regional seas bordered by EU countries, it also takes into account the international dimension in recognition of the importance of reducing the EU's footprint in marine areas in other parts of the world, including the High Seas.

CONTENT : the objective of the Strategy is to protect and restore Europe's oceans and seas and ensure

that human activities are carried out in a sustainable manner so that current and futuregenerations enjoy and benefit from biologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas that are safe, clean, healthy and productive.

If the EU is to achieve this ambitious objective, a new approach and principles to inform the design and implementation of a future EU strategy will be required, encompassing:

- a dual EU/regional approachsetting at EU level common co-operation and approaches among Member States and third countries bordering EU oceans and seas, but leaving the planning and execution of measures to the regional level to take into account the diversity of conditions, problems and needs of marine regions requiring tailor-made solutions.

- aknowledge-based approach, in order to achieve informed policy-making.

- an ecosystem-based approach**,** whereby human activities affecting the marine environment will be managed in an integrated manner promoting conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way of oceans and seas.

- a co-operative approach, providing for broad engagement with all relevant stakeholders and enhancing co-operation with existing regional seas conventions.

The Commission considers that in order to achieve the objective of the Strategy a binding legal commitment is required. It proposes a Marine Strategy Directive, ambitious in its scope but not overly prescriptive in its tools.

In developing improved co-ordination in relation to environmental issues, the Strategy will deliver the environmental pillar of the future Maritime Policy. It will be reviewed in 2010 and feed into the final evaluation of the 6th Environmental Action Programme.