



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2174(INI)	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		29/11/2005
		PPE-DE KUŠKIS Aldis	
Council of the European Union	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.	
European Commission	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Environment	2757	23/10/2006
	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Environment	DIMAS Stavros	

Key events			
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	2757	Summary
13/11/2006	Debate in Parliament		
14/11/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/11/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0486/2006	Summary
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 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33975

Documentation gateway					
Document attached to the procedure		COM(2005)0504	24/10/2005	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE374.344	21/06/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE378.596	18/09/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0364/2006	17/10/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0486/2006	14/11/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)0054	11/01/2007	EC	

Thematic strategy on the marine environment

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Aldis KUSKIS (EPP-ED, LV) in response to the Commission communication on a thematic strategy on the protection and conservation of the marine environment. The report welcomed the "overarching objective of promoting sustainable use of the seas and conservation of marine ecosystems", but expressed disappointment at the proposed Marine Strategy Directive (see COD/2005/0211) which, it felt, "will not succeed in mobilising the regional and local authorities to take the appropriate measures".

The committee called for the inclusion in the Directive of a common EU-wide definition of 'good environmental status' (GES), 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".

Referring to the Green Paper "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union", the report warned against too great an emphasis on an economic approach and urged that "a balance be struck between the economic and ecological angles". The Marine Strategy Directive should provide the legal framework for the preservation and integrity of the marine environment and hence for the appropriate management units - the Marine Regions and Strategies - for marine planning and decisions.

On budgetary matters, the committee expressed concern at the lack of financial commitment for the implementation of the Marine Strategies and asked the Commission and the Member States to identify the measures that could be co-financed through LIFE+.

To ensure that the Directive did not create extra layers of bureaucracy, the Commission and Member States were urged to ensure "either that the regional marine conventions have the relevant legal and administrative capacities or that mechanisms for joint implementation of the Strategy are developed between the different regional bodies operating within the same marine region". The Commission was also asked to study the possibility of making the Baltic Sea into a pilot area, with the forthcoming Baltic Sea Action Plan from the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM) acting as a pilot programme to implement the Strategy objectives in the Baltic Sea Marine Region. In addition, the report highlighted the importance of protecting the "extremely fragile ecosystem" of the Arctic waters and called on the Commission to report to Parliament and the Council by 2008 on the possibility of establishing the Arctic as a protected area, similar to the Antarctic, and designated as a "natural reserve devoted to peace and science".

Lastly, the committee recommended that the Black Sea be included in the Marine Regions to be covered by the Marine Strategy Directive, in view of the forthcoming accession of Romania and Bulgaria and the accession negotiations under way with Turkey.

Thematic strategy on the marine environment

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

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 Kušis (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.)