Integrated maritime policy (IMP) - Evaluation of progress made and new challenges

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), in response to several Commission communications on the subject.

Members welcomed the European Commission?s October 2009 package on the integrated maritime policy (IMP) and confirm overall the validity of the integrated approach to maritime affairs.

The resolution stresses that IMP should contribute to achieving a competitive, social and sustainable Union. It takes the view in this regard that the development of IMP must harmoniously incorporate efforts to attain economic development, a high level of employment ? particularly by making the sector more attractive for young people through training actions and the launch of a ?Maritime Erasmus? ? and environmental protection. It states, therefore, that the IMP should be interconnected with the objectives and initiatives of the EU 2020 Strategy.

The Commission is called upon to:

- come up with an overarching, cross-sectoral strategy for sustainable growth in coastal regions and maritime sectors by 2013, based on a broad investigation of potentials and policy options and on broad stakeholder consultation;
- take action after the oil spill catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico, and create legal certainty in the field of offshore oil extraction in Europe by submitting a coordinated European action strategy for emergency preparedness and for tackling disasters caused by drilling rigs and tankers, at an international level especially in cases of cross-border contamination;
- extend the mandate of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) on safety inspections of offshore installations and the cleaning up of oil spills in the review of the EMSA Regulation;
- ensure that its stated intention to finance the IMP with EUR 50 million over the next two years in order to build upon previous projects in the areas of policy, governance, sustainability and surveillance is supported.

Maritime governance: Parliament calls on those Member States whose IMP administrative structures are still highly fragmented, to establish forthwith unified and integrated maritime governance structures.

The Commission, the Member States and coastal regions are called upon to intensify their efforts in defining integrated maritime policies and in building adequate maritime governance structures, which make it possible to take decisions on the basis of the best information available, involving all interested parties and therefore better respecting the different policy objectives.

Members propose the establishment and development of strategies for the EU?s maritime macro-regions in the context of strategic approaches for regional maritime areas.

In addition, the resolution invites the Member States, the Council and the Commission to:

- intensify their dialogue at international level on IMP and other maritime issues in the competent fora, including on the ratification and implementation of UNCLOS;
- support the inclusion of IMP in the financial leverage instruments and objectives of the EU?s external policy through the development of suitable initiatives aimed at addressing problems such as pollution, illegal fishing and piracy.

Sea basin initiatives and strategies: the resolution welcomes the regional sea-basin initiatives and strategies proposed so far by the Commission and the macro regional strategies of relevance to the sea. It calls for further dialogue and cooperation in order to improve governance of the marine space and coastal areas in the framework of a multi-level approach in the different maritime sea basins, including the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Atlantic, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean area, and asks the Commission to take rapid steps in cooperation with Member States to draw up and present actions in these regions.

Maritime spatial planning: Members are of the view that the management of intensifying and increasingly competing sea uses on an eco-system basis requires coordinated, streamlined and cross-border maritime spatial planning as a neutral tool.

The resolution notes the essential importance of European maritime spatial planning and its uses for coastal regions and the outermost regions in particular.

Maritime Surveillance: Parliament considers that a well coordinated and integrated cross-pillar, cross-sectoral, and cross-border approach towards maritime surveillance will improve protection of the interests of Member States and the European Union and protection against marine pollution and illegal actions.

The resolution calls therefore on the Commission, the Member States, EU agencies and in particular the EMSA, and relevant organisations to speed up their efforts in terms of cooperation and coordination and with regard to the necessary legislative adaptations.

Parliament reiterates its call for improved cooperation between Member States? national inspectorates, coastguards and navies and reminds the Commission to carry out ? as requested earlier by the European Parliament for 2005 in Directive 2005/35/EC ? a feasibility study with the prospect of creating a European Coastguard Service.

Among the other recommendations, the report calls on the Commission to:

- take into account the critical role of maritime freight transport in trade today, to promote the development of secondary and less congested ports and to adequately address the question of maritime transport security measures in the EU and abroad by investing in enhancing multilayered risk management systems for targeting and inspecting dangerous cargo
- integrate the European Maritime Policy and the inland waterways policies, in order to maximise the potential of the waterway transport and to create efficient and diversified ways of transport;
- improve the working conditions of seafarers by appropriate means, to implement the ILO Maritime Labour Convention in Community

law and to propose a programme for the qualification and training of seafarers and especially the recruitment of young people, including those from third countries;

- consider a coordinated European industrial policy initiative aimed at increasing competitiveness, supporting the excellence of European shipbuilding, and the safety and environmental performance and competitiveness of shipping in the common maritime space without barriers;
- coherently integrate the CO2 reduction targets and introduce economic market based instruments, into the maritime sector such as (emissions trading schemes) and to develop a strategy to mitigate the specific impacts of climate change on coastal and island regions;
- come up with a strategy for sustainable coastal, islands and marine tourism.
- accelerate their efforts to make the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET) operational as soon as possible.