

**PRELIMINARY EUROPÊCHE POSITION REGARDING ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN
INTO ACCOUNT WITHIN A EUROPEAN MARITIME POLICY
(Contribution to the Conference in Brussels on 17.11.05)**

1. Europêche welcomes the initiative and its objectives.
2. Europêche expects the Green paper impatiently and hopes fisheries will be dealt with in due consideration.
3. Europêche hopes it will not prevent the Commission to dedicate enough time to fisheries, particularly given the hard context the sector is presently facing.
4. Fishery is a sustainable use of the seas, that is part of the rules of the CFP. We are furthermore harvesting a renewable resource. That is not the case for the other extracting activities. Fishermen can play a role in the protection of the marine environment as they navigate, are equipped, can report anomalies, etc.

We witness the sea area being claimed for other uses, both close to land, such as port extensions, recreational activities, and further out at sea, such as oil and gas exploration, windmills, cables, sand and gravel.

The sea is the main motorway for freight to and from the Union (80%) and one of the main routes for intra-Community trade. It is therefore the basis for our prosperity and economic development, but it is also vulnerable: the environment, accidents, and – as the Commission points out – terrorism!

5. Maritime policy is an opportunity to integrate the management of different sectors in a same policy (shipping, ports, shipbuilding, tourism, marine equipment, dredging, offshore, maritime services and R&D, yachting, fisheries etc.), hence the importance of establishing a rational and well-thought consultation procedure including all stakeholders (good governance) while avoiding redundant work with the existing advisory bodies dealing with the different policies (DG Fish and ACFA + RACs, DG environment + marine strategy + biodiversity expert group, DG transport, etc.) which are numerous.
6. As far as the link with the marine strategy is concerned, one must make sure that existing strategic and legal instruments in that area as developed by DG Environment will be used as pillars in the work on the maritime policy by DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs.
7. It is important that reference be made to the need for stakeholders to be consulted prior to EU positions/legislative acts at EU level and presented in the international bodies (UN, regional organisations, ILO, IMO, etc.).
8. It is equally necessary that reference be made to the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) aiming at « promoting the peaceful uses of the seas and oceans, the equitable and efficient utilisation of their resources, the conservation of their living resources, and the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment ».
9. Finally, a balance should be found between the need of respecting human development (active measures in favour of fishermen) and the need to use resources in a sustainable way (World Conservation Congress resolutions).

10. The recognition of the impact of other activities than fisheries on the marine resources (marine pollution, transport, noise, climate change, etc.) is an important step forward for the fisheries sector. Global studies are necessary in this context. The fisheries sector often feels being the unique target of the EU legislation while little is done to prevent pollution, etc. The integral maritime policy can give a clearer picture of the exact situation regarding certain changes in fish stocks or the depletion of certain species.
 11. While the sector is ready to accept the development of an eco-system approach to fisheries management, as required by the reformed CFP, it has concerns about the additional constraints that may be imposed by the Natura 2000 network and other potential Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) on open access and unrestricted fishing activity in those areas. The development of fisheries activities that do not disturb the objectives for protection should be allowed in such areas.
 12. Whilst recognising the reality of the Habitats and Birds Directives necessary to promote the conservation of representative species and habitats in Community Waters or to promote the health of the coastal and marine environment generally (Water Framework Directive), Europêche notes that their application may potentially impose further constraints on the sector's ability to operate viably.
 13. This combination of threats and ecosystem demands make it essential that the sector be consulted before decisions are taken concerning the use of the sea, and that it is able to advance proposals to promote the cohabitation of activities and the minimisation of potential conflicts of interest.
 14. Guaranteeing the permanence of the sector as a source of high-value, healthy food for consumers requires the formulation of a policy that seeks a fair balance between the legitimate needs of all the sectors and does not operate to the disproportionate detriment of the fisheries sector.
 15. In light of the above, Europêche urges the European Commission:
 - to promote and implement spatial planning for Community Waters which takes due account of the need to maintain a sustainable and geographically representative fishing sector, especially respecting the needs of communities which have a high dependence on the sector for their livelihood.
 - to assess the impact of Community policy on human uses (oil, gas, renewable energy, aggregates, etc) other than fisheries on the latter, and to take a strategic overview of the development and spatial distribution of those industries such that they do not undermine sustainable fishing practices.
 - to evaluate the consequences of the European Bird and Habitats directives on the sector, as well as the progress of implementation of these directives within the CFP.
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