



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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The Integrated Maritime Policy gains momentum

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

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Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to be in Nicosia right when Cyprus is holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU. I am delighted to see so many European Ministers here: it means that maritime affairs are high on everybody's agenda, and I want to thank Minister Florentzou and his Ministry for giving them even more momentum with this landmark event.

The Integrated Maritime Policy is only five years old but it has highlighted the benefits of working together – with different ministries, with the public and private sector, with regions and with other countries. Thanks to the IMP, we have laid down objectives for the Arctic, the Atlantic, the Baltic and other sea-basins and set up a process to achieve them. We have succeeded in finding ways to ensure that investment and research priorities are identified and financed by the future Horizon 2020 programme. And we are working hard to anchor maritime growth in all Community funding instruments for 2014-2020.

At the same time, we have been addressing the structural problems of specific industries. The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy that we are now discussing will give healthier fish stocks and better jobs soon – not just for fishermen, but also in the processing factories, in the supermarkets and in the restaurants.

Let's face it: five years ago, integration was just a promising idea; now we wonder how we managed without it and we are ready to build further.

We can do it, because now we can do things we couldn't do before. We have the technology to work further offshore, even under severe weather conditions. We have materials that withstand the corrosion of salty water. We have remotely controlled submarines which can explore the ocean depths.

But we also must do it because we are convinced that maritime sectors will make a stronger contribution to European growth and help Europe out of the economic crisis.

So far we have focussed on removing the hurdles to the blue economy as a whole:

- the gaps in our knowledge of the sea through the mapping of the seabed for all EU waters by 2020;
- the malfunctions against dangerous or illegal activities with the integration of maritime surveillance at European level;
- the conflicts of uses through the promotion of maritime spatial planning.

We are reducing red tape, enhancing skills and improving access to capital, reducing the processes for licensing new activities, increasing safety at sea and facilitating short-sea shipping.

But how can we boost even more the Maritime economy ?

The marine and maritime economic sectors already employ well over 5 million people and account for a gross value added (GVA) of €500 billion. According to a recent study, these figures are expected to grow to €600 billion and 7 million employed people in 2020.

There is room for growth and jobs !

To trace the way forward, the Commission has launched last month the Blue Growth initiative which will look more closely at five particular industries to see what incentives can be put in place and what bottlenecks can be removed.

The first of them is blue energy.

Offshore wind power is rapidly expanding in Europe, and projections are even more promising. With it come the technologies, grid connections and port facilities that will also enable electricity from waves, currents and tides to enter the marketplace and reduce our carbon emissions. This is important because, if the output of wind energy fluctuates, wave and tidal energy complement it nicely with a more predictable supply.

Many coastal areas have the right conditions for this technology and we need to go ahead not only for its potential to contribute to energy security and low-carbon emissions, but also for its export potential. We will propose next year what could be the most appropriate way for the EU to act.

The second industry is aquaculture.

The problem here is that global production is on the rise, but European production isn't. Given the increasing demand for quality seafood products everywhere, there is ample opportunity for growth here. There is competition for space between aquaculture and other sectors. I know how much time and effort a license to build or expand can take. I am convinced we need to improve the overall governance of space allocation to allow aquaculture farms to make a claim on some space.

Early next year, the Commission will propose Strategic Guidelines on Aquaculture. This should provide orientation both for public funding and facilitating growth in this area.

And we come to the third domain, which is blue biotechnology.

This has real potential. The ocean hosts some of the most diverse life forms on the planet; organisms which can withstand extreme pressures, extreme temperatures; and which can live without light. Will our increasing ability to explore the deep and to analyse genetic structure deliver new products for the food, health, cosmetics, industrial chemicals, bio-materials and biofuel industries? Will we find new drugs to help us beat cancer? By 2014, we aim to deliver a Communication outlining how the EU can help this emerging industry.

The fourth sector is seabed mining.

With commodity prices remaining high, we can't ignore the rich mineral deposits on the seabed. Europe has the technology. If there is going to be an expansion of the sector, we want to be part of it. And we need to make sure that it does not hurt the delicate deep-sea ecosystems. We have already proposed measures to protect these habitats from deep-sea fishing and must do the same for emerging activities. We want deep-sea mining, as long as it is sustainable.

Last but not least, maritime, coastal and cruise tourism.

In terms of employment it is the EU's largest maritime activity: over 2 million jobs that are the economic lifeline of coastal communities across Europe. Tourism also bears on coastal and marine ecosystems, and this means we need sustainable policies that ensure constant growth for the sector on one hand and protect our marine eco-systems and their rich biodiversity on the other. There is strong interest in this policy area because of its high growth potential: coastal and maritime tourism is expected to grow by 2 to 3 percent by 2020.

Last week, during European Tourism Day, I presented the results of the public consultation we held in view of a new communication next year. Our agenda will include new diversification strategies for SMEs, new strategies to improve the competitiveness of our coasts as against non-European destinations, and issue like transport connectivity and seasonality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Making this happen requires the input of us all. We can use maritime policy as a vehicle to convey our individual efforts toward a common objective: embracing blue growth and creating new opportunities for prosperity. President Barroso will be here tomorrow to underline the importance that the Commission attaches to this.

Five years ago we started from scratch. We laid the foundations. Tomorrow we are signing the "Limassol Declaration" that gives new impetus to our prosperity project and renews our commitment to move on to the next phase of an effective maritime policy.

Let's build Maritime Europe, together.