

Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 18 December 2025 on the decarbonisation and modernisation of EU fisheries, and the development and deployment of fishing gear

- 1. Rapporteur:** Ton DIEPEVEEN (Pfe / NL)
- 2. References :** 2024/2123(INI) / A10-0236/2025 / P10_TA(2025)0344
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 18 December 2025
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Fisheries (PECH)
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution assesses the need for a just and inclusive energy transition to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 in fisheries and aquaculture, ensuring this transition supports EU goals while safeguarding coastal communities and livelihoods. It emphasises the need for a phased approach, taking into account technological readiness, fuel availability, and legislative timelines, while addressing the challenge of fleet diversity which rules out one-size-fits-all solutions. It highlights that targeted support for small-scale fisheries is essential due to ageing vessels affecting efficiency. The resolution stresses that vessel renewal and retrofitting are required, but the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) Regulations hinder investment and innovation in modernisation efforts.

In terms of specific requests, the resolution calls for the establishment of a realistic and phased roadmap for the decarbonisation of fisheries. It urges a review of the CFP and EMFAF rules that currently constrain fleet modernisation, and it calls for the mobilisation of additional and innovative funding instruments beyond existing schemes, to leverage private investment. The Commission is asked to strengthen support for research and deployment of alternative fuels, vessels and gear, and to uphold fuel taxation until clean propulsion systems are affordable and scalable. The resolution also emphasises the need to facilitate port and energy infrastructure upgrades. Finally, the resolution underlines the importance of targeted support for small-scale fisheries, outermost regions, and inclusive governance involving fishers in policy design, testing and implementation.

Response to requests and overview of action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:

The Commission welcomes the Parliament's Resolution and agrees with many of its findings.

The extensive dependency on fossil fuels is one of the significant challenges the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector is facing, threatening the sector's long-term profitability and resilience. The Commission is actively engaging with the sector to accelerate the energy transition, aiming for increased energy efficiency, low carbon operations, and carbon neutrality by 2050, while maintaining competitiveness. The Energy Transition Partnership was launched to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange among stakeholders. The Commission also collaborates with Member States and institutions like the European Investment Bank (EIB) to support this transition. Challenges include immature technologies, limited renewable fuel availability, and investment obstacles. Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 aligns with EU policies like the Competitiveness Compass and Clean Industrial Deal, as well as the European Ocean Pact and future 2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture, focusing on environmental impact reduction and ocean health sustainability.

With respect to paragraph 4 which calls for a coordinated and long-term framework, *such as the priorities outlined in the Commission communication of 5 June 2025 entitled 'European Ocean Pact' (COM(2025)0281), to decarbonise fisheries and aquaculture* and ensure that no fleet segment or region is left behind, it is important to note that, in the European Ocean Pact, the Commission committed to build on existing legislation and initiatives and to introduce a holistic approach across all ocean-related policy areas through the European Ocean Act. Building on the revision of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, the Ocean Act aims to strengthen and modernise maritime spatial planning as a strategic tool that serves and implements the European Ocean Pact's priorities. It seeks to do this through increased cross-sectoral coordination at national level and a better organised sea-basin approach. It also aims to improve ocean observation governance. The Act will reference existing binding targets, help meet them effectively and consistently and streamline reporting obligations.

Addressing paragraph 9 which calls on the Commission *to identify and establish additional and sufficient funding instruments beyond the EMFAF, including innovative financing models, to support the sector's massive investment needs for decarbonisation and the energy transition*, the Commission highlights that the EMFAF already allows for a wide range of support measures. Some of them, like engine replacement, are subject to specific conditions to avoid unintended harmful effects on resources (some types of investment can enhance the capacity of the fleet and allow it to fish longer, faster and further, hence risks of overfishing). For the vast majority of actions, the EMFAF rules are very flexible and allow Member States to design tailor-made support schemes. The EMFAF can support the development of new solutions for the fleet through innovation and test of new technology (e.g. prototypes of 'vessels of the future'). The EMFAF can also support investments in mature technology to modernise the fleet such as investments on board to improve gear selectivity, safety on board, energy efficiency and ergonomics. However, the fund does not support the construction of

new fishing vessels in order to avoid any harmful effects that could lead to overfishing and taking into account the cost of new vessels and the need to ensure the availability of funds for other fisheries-related needs. The Commission published a guide on “Financing opportunities for the Green Energy Transition of Fisheries and Aquaculture - Maritime Forum”, identifying the major current EU funding, beyond EMFAF, that can be used for energy transition projects.

For the future MFF, the Commission has proposed a clear shift in the delivery model. The proposed legal framework will no longer include detailed eligibility rules. Instead, it will be up to the Member States and regions to design and implement measures according to their needs and priorities, while addressing EU objectives and priorities. In particular, in the Commission’s proposal, Member States are required to concentrate resources of their Plans on “supporting fisheries, aquaculture and maritime activities, including small scale fishing, the implementation of the CFP, as well as the European Ocean Pact (...)”. The proposed approach should help maximise support for the sector which will benefit from synergies across EU policies supported under the National and Regional Partnership Plans. The proposal on the Performance Framework Regulation includes the principle of ‘do-no-significant-harm’ (DNSH) which will apply to the entire EU budget, in line with the EU Financial Regulation. The DNSH principle mandates that all programmes and activities must fulfil their intended goals and set objectives, ensuring they do not fund any activities that could cause considerable harm and hinder environmental objectives, taking into account sector-specific guidelines. By aligning funding mechanisms with the operational realities of the sector, engaging appropriate financial partners, and scaling up blended and flexible finance solutions, the EU can transform its blue economy into a sustainable and competitive driver of coastal prosperity. In addition, financial instruments represent a sustainable and efficient way to invest in growth and development. These instruments can support a broad range of objectives to the benefit of a wide range of final recipients in the fisheries, aquaculture, and blue economy sectors through different financial products – loans, guarantees and equity. Grants, such as those under EMFAF, remain an important type of support for many Member States in the current programming period, but results show that there is scope to combine EMFAF grants with financial instruments, to leverage additional resources and address market needs. The Commission will continue its efforts to strengthen the deployment of financial instruments, including through enhanced cooperation with the EIB Group, national promotional banks, and the European Competitiveness Fund InvestEU instrument.

Regarding paragraph 10 the Commission notes the recommendation to *support research into vessel design, including innovations beyond propulsion systems, such as improved hull hydrodynamics, lightweight composite materials, and the replacement of hydraulic-mechanical systems with electric drives*. The Commission has been supporting

research and innovation, including through the launch of several initiatives and funding opportunities under the Horizon Europe programme and EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters. This relates to a dedicated call for proposals¹, which supported several projects² that aimed to develop and demonstrate innovative solutions and technologies for reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, including improvements to vessel design. Furthermore, in 2025 the Commission has launched another call for proposals³ which includes a focus on digital technologies and energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture, including innovations in vessel design. The Commission remains committed to support research and innovation in the field of vessel design, in line with the priorities set out in the Horizon Europe programme and the EMFAF. Finally, at the request of the European Parliament, in 2024 the Commission launched a call for a pilot project on energy transition, awarded in 2025 to the HY2FISH project. This three-year project aims to develop and demonstrate innovative, scalable, and cost-effective solutions by retrofitting a demonstrator fishing vessel off the Spanish coast. The project targets a 40% reduction in fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions through the use of recyclable hull appendages to enhance hydrodynamics and reduce noise, implementing hybrid propulsion systems with hydrogen rotary generators, fuel cells, and marine batteries, as well as installing lightweight, flexible photovoltaic panels.

In relation to the recommendation of paragraph 17 which calls on the Commission, in conjunction with the Member States, to consider schemes that better facilitate and support investments in clean energy, adapted to local realities and needs, to promote the energy transition and ensure a just transition towards the decarbonisation and energy transition of the fleet, it must be noted that under the current EMFAF but also as proposed in the future programming period, the Commission will continue to support the Member States as regards investments which contribute to energy transition and are adapted to local needs.

Regarding paragraph 19 which highlights that small-scale and artisanal fisheries generally operate with lower environmental and carbon impacts and therefore, depending on the region, play an essential role in the ecological and social fabric of those regions; calls on the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States, to establish and implement support mechanisms for small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries that make it possible to tackle the specific problems faced by this part of the sector, it has to be recalled that the CFP Regulation applies to all vessels. However, there are possibilities for Member States, based on their national context, to support small-scale

1 Under the topic HORIZON-MISS-2023-OCEAN-01-05

2 REFEST, SEAGLOW, and H2-SEAS

3 HORIZON-MISS-2025-03-OCEAN-03

fishers, such as preferential access to EU waters up to 12 nautical miles or the allocation criteria for fishing opportunities. Quota allocation remained a prerogative of Member States. In November 2025, the Commission published a Communication for enhanced transparency and good governance in the allocation of fishing opportunities by Member States⁴. It encourages Member States to use this allocation process to support small-scale and coastal fishers and to promote responsible fishing by providing incentives to those operators who fish in the least environmentally damaging way and who provide the greatest benefit for the society (in line with recital 33 of the CFP Regulation). EMFAF already includes special treatment for the small-scale sector, as almost all the projects related to this sector are eligible for support at a rate of public aid of 100% (according, for instance, to recital (33) as well as Annex III of Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 establishing the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1004). The Commission will continue to ensure that small-scale fishers are fully acknowledged when it comes to collecting data about accidents at sea and that their perspectives are duly considered. This topic has also been addressed in the recent project “Fishers of the Future”. The Commission will also take it into consideration while developing the social indicators to be included in the socio-economic impact assessments of conservation measures. In addition, Member States must endeavour to introduce simplified procedures for small scale coastal fishing businesses applying for financial support. Concerning control, currently, there are no burdensome new digital control tools for small-scale fishers under the new fisheries control regulation. The revised control regulation is introducing IT tools for monitoring and reporting of small-scale fisheries; this will digitalise control and reduce administrative burden. All those new tools are eligible for financial support under EMFAF. The evaluation of the CFP Regulation will be an opportunity to take stock of the overarching effectiveness and coherence of the current policy, including for small-scale fisheries.

Paragraph 20 emphasises that financing needs require an in-depth study by the Commission and solutions that also include savings products for European citizens and specialist banks, such as maritime banks, to offer financing with the support of a European guarantee for the financial products concerned and support from the European Investment Bank. In this regard, the EIB/Fi Compass Financial Instruments Study will soon be published which provides an overview of financing needs in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector, common investment barriers and the landscape of financial instruments and available products for the sector across the EU. Another challenge is the “ageing” of the sector (both vessels and fishers), and applicants’ (historical) preference for grants. The main objective should be to work towards making funding more

4 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/6227/oj>

accessible, notably via lower rates, preferential terms, and continue working together with the EIB to explore possible options.

Paragraph 25 calls for the *maritime industrial strategy to include the fishing fleet within its objective of supporting the blue economy and securing or regaining Europe's global leadership in maritime technologies*. The European Industrial Maritime Strategy recognises the importance for the maritime sector of the fishing vessels within the vital interest of food supply, specifically mentioning the delivery of the roadmap on fisheries and aquaculture by Q3 2026, that will guide the sector on the energy transition.

Paragraph 34 stresses that *small-scale coastal fishing, particularly in island and outermost regions, is a cornerstone for food security, and for the economic, social and cultural fabric of many local communities where access to fresh and healthy protein sources is closely linked to the viability of local fishing activity; calls on the Commission to ensure that environmental objectives are fully aligned with the economic sustainability of small scale coastal fisheries*. The Commission ensures the implementation of the CFP Regulation. The first objective of the CFP, as set out in Article 2, is that activities are environmentally sustainable in the long-term and are managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies. Small-scale coastal fisheries play a particularly important role for the community in socio-economic terms, especially in island and outermost regions. This is recognised in recital 19, stressing that Member States should endeavour to give preferential access to such fishers. They are also afforded the possibility of 100% EU financing rate for support provided under the EMFAF. Notwithstanding this, the long-term socio-economic viability of the fishery is dependent on its environmental viability. For this reason, the annual assessment of the balance of the fishing capacity of the European fishing fleets with the available fishing opportunities provides an informed basis for identifying where precautions must be taken in relation to the fishing pressures placed on the fish stocks. In this sense, the Commission remains committed to ensuring that environmental objectives are fully aligned with the economic sustainability of small-scale coastal fisheries.

Paragraph 37 suggests that the *Commission review the carbon and environmental impacts of all fisheries and aquaculture imports in order to prevent an unlevel playing field with global competitors that are not subject to similarly stringent regulatory frameworks or equivalent environmental, health and social standards*. The European market continues to heavily rely on imports to meet our demand for fisheries and seafood products. The sustainability of these imports is an increasing concern. The Commission is already strengthening the sustainability of our import regimes by including strong sustainability and development chapters in our Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with major fishing nations. The Commission is also conducting a back-to-back evaluation and impact assessment concerning the introduction of

sustainability criteria under the EU Autonomous Tariff Quotas (ATQs) for fisheries products. This assessment is ongoing and the Commission expects to make a proposal to the Council for the next regulatory period of the ATQ Regime (2027-2029) in the first half of 2026, taking into account its results. Our goal is clear: maintain the necessary supply to ensure food security, while improving the sustainability of our imported fisheries and aquaculture products as much as possible. This could also indirectly contribute to improving the level playing field for the EU fleet. The EU also adopted the EU Forced Labour Regulation in December 2024 and it will start being applied in December 2027. The Regulation bans all products made with forced labour irrespective of their origin (be it the EU or third countries). Therefore, it is a market ban, not an import ban. The bans will be imposed on specific products based on investigations conducted by the Commission for forced labour cases occurring outside the EU, and by Member States for cases within the EU.

Paragraph 55 to find a solution that would balance the needs of fishing workers with the need to ensure that the EU fleet's fishing capacity is not increased, in particular by excluding 'social and safety' related tonnage from the calculation of fishing capacity. The Commission remarks that the current CFP Regulation does not hinder Member States from allowing increases in capacity of fishing vessels to improve living conditions and safety, as long as they respect the overall capacity ceilings and the entry/exit scheme. The existing margin between the capacity of the Member States' fishing fleets and the capacity ceilings can be used to this effect. In most Member States there is "latent" capacity (i.e. between the actual capacity of the fleet and the capacity ceilings stemming from the CFP Regulation) that could be used to increase the capacity of vessels to improve safety, living and working conditions or for the installation of more energy efficient propulsion systems requiring more space, such as LNG. In addition, as mentioned above, the EMFAF provides for financial support for this type of improvements.

Paragraph 56 calls on the Commission, for this purpose, and while maintaining a framework and limits that prevent overfishing, to carry out an in-depth review of the indicators that measure fishing capacity and the impact of fishing. The Commission has engaged a study on the fishing fleet policy that is looking into the current proxies that define fishing capacity (GT and kW) and explores alternative or additional proxies. The results of this study are expected in 2026 and along with the evaluation of the CFP Regulation (which also covers the fleet policy) are expected to provide important insights.

Paragraph 57 calls on the Commission to make decarbonisation a means of supporting the viability of coastal fishing in the EU and to consider raising, on a temporary and tailored basis, the ceiling for de minimis aid in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, with a view to supporting the adoption of low-emission technologies, sustainable fleet renewal and/or adaptation and energy efficiency throughout the supply chain, to be

carried out in conjunction with professionals in this area of the fleet, with a view to stimulating investment. The ceiling for the de minimis aid is determined as a maximum amount of support that can be granted per undertaking over any period of the three fiscal years, based on an assessment that aid below a certain amount does not have an impact on competition and trade. Therefore, Member States are not obliged to link this support to a specific kind of investments, though they are of course free to do so. The ceiling has already been raised in 2023 for undertakings active in the primary production of fisheries and aquaculture product to up to 40.000 per undertaking per three years fiscal period, provided that the Member State has in place a national central register (Article 3(2a) of [Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 717/2014](#), as amended), and for undertakings active in the processing and marketing of fisheries products to up to 300.000 Euro over any period of three calendar years, as for these undertaking the ceilings of the General de minimis Regulation applies (Article 3(2a) of [Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2831](#)). Adoption of low emission technologies and increase of energy efficiencies throughout the primary production of fishery and aquaculture products can already be supported by Member States, without needing to notify the aid to the Commission, under the Fisheries Block Exemption Regulation ([Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2473](#) -FIBER) (e.g. Articles 27 (for fishers) and 33 (in aquaculture)). The [Fisheries State aid guidelines](#) also address aid to improve energy efficiency, e.g. they set compatibility criteria for State aid for engine replacement and for aid for the renewal of the fleet in the outermost regions. They also set compatibility criteria for environmental aid for aquaculture. Decarbonisation support for processors of fisheries products is equally possible in compliance with both sector specific State aid rules, i.e. namely article 46 of the FIBER (article 46) and the Fisheries Guidelines, and horizontal State aid legislative rules and guidelines, such as [the General block Exemption regulation \(Commission Regulation \(EU\) 651/2014\)](#) the [Clean Industrial Deal State aid Framework](#), or [the Guidelines on State aid for climate, environmental protection and energy](#). In short, State aid rules offer sufficient and tailor-made possibilities for the decarbonisation of the fisheries sector beyond the minimis.

Paragraph 59 and paragraph 64 urge the Commission to support innovation through investments in increasing the selectivity of fishing gear, enhancements to port infrastructure, and upgrades to fishing vessels aimed at improving health, safety and working conditions, increasing energy efficiency, lowering emissions and enhancing the quality of catches, and calling on the Commission to consider financial support to mitigate the risk of loss of income of professionals during experimental phases, and speeding up the deployment of more selective, lower-impact fishing gear. Concerning support for innovation, the EU is already supporting innovation in fisheries, for example, under EMFAF national programmes or under a dedicated call for the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Water under the Horizon Europe Work

Programme 2026-2027⁵. The Commission recognises their central role in ensuring a sustainable, resilient and competitive future of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sectors. In this regard, the Commission is requesting the International Commission for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) to advise on how the innovations available are incorporated by the fishing industry or what is preventing their use.

Paragraph 62 calls on the Commission *to take account of the specific characteristics of each sea basin and regional differences, to step up the regionalisation and adaptation of multiannual management plans in line with these selectivity objectives and to prioritise the use of gear that has less impact on ecosystems, in close collaboration with advisory committees and engaging with local fleets, taking into account socio-economic effects and climate change.* The CFP Regulation already encompasses the consideration of the specific characteristics of each sea basin and regional differences. It has been observed in practice through Article 18 of the CFP (Regionalisation) and the important number of Joint Recommendations submitted by Member States having a direct management interest on certain conservation measures. As an example, under the Technical Measures Regulation, more than 20 delegated acts have been adopted in 5 years, on the basis of Joint Recommendations submitted by Member States in order to take into account regional specificities of the relevant fisheries. Each sea basin has its own Annex in the Technical Measures Regulation with specific measures to protect juveniles and to minimise the incidental catches of sensitive marine species and the negative impact of fishing activities on the environment. Nothing precludes Member States from submitting other new Joint Recommendations in view of achieving the objectives of multiannual plans or other relevant conservation measures.

Paragraph 66 calls on the Commission *to ensure the inclusive involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including small-scale fishers, producer organisations and coastal communities, in the design, development and assessment of innovative fishing gear, as opposed to adopting a one-size-fits-all approach; underlines that participatory governance strengthens the legitimacy, practicality and acceptance of rules, while allowing the incorporation of local ecological knowledge and lived experience.* Both the CFP Regulation evaluation and the Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture are highly participatory initiatives, with a broad range of stakeholders providing input and feedback. The regionalisation process of the CFP, which can reflect regional and local

5 WP 2026-27 - HORIZON-MISS-2027-03-OCEAN-03: Green, circular and resilient harbours. Transforming port/harbour operations through sustainable development practices, circular economy principles, green infrastructure implementation, climate adaptation measures, renewable energy integration, and smart port technologies.
Horizon Europe 2026-2027 Work Programme: Discover the topics for the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters! | Research and Innovation

specificities via stakeholder involvement, may in certain cases be explored as a way forward to address challenges affecting specific coastal and island communities. Additionally, in the aftermath of the adoption of Communication on the energy transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture⁶, the Commission launched the Energy transition partnership (ETP), a platform for dialogue amongst a wide range of stakeholders linked to the energy transition in the sector, with the aim to promote and enable dialogue with all stakeholders and reduce knowledge fragmentation. Since then, the ETP has grown to featuring ten different working groups (Distant Water Fleet, Large-Scale Fisheries, Small-Scale Coastal Fisheries, Inland Aquaculture, Offshore Aquaculture, Ports, Fishing Shipbuilding Industry, Processing Industry, Research & Academia, and NGOs), each of them led by a Support group coordinator representing each of the sectors. Over the past year, the ETP Support Group has brought together expertise and perspectives from across the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to advance the EU's energy transition agenda. The work has been spread through nearly 400 stakeholders participating in 38 meetings and workshops facilitated by Support Group Coordinators, aiming at gathering input on challenges and solutions for the energy transition. These will be part of the input for the upcoming Commission's roadmap, that will be adopted together with the Vision 2040 in EU fisheries and aquaculture in Q3 2026.

With regard to Paragraph 72, which calls on the Commission, the Member States and regional authorities to develop the use of 'living labs' to reconcile innovation with local initiatives to allow for practical testing in order to ensure that new innovations work in practice and do not impose unnecessary burdens on the sector, the Commission supports the development of living labs and has been exploring opportunities, including with the EIB, to create synergies with networks to develop living labs and EU-wide innovation ecosystems in real-life environments. The Commission has also been engaging with regions and stakeholders to set up regional living labs with the engagement of stakeholders such as shipbuilders, ports, and investors. The Commission will continue to work to enable living labs to develop and to be a space for local innovation for the energy transition in the sector.

⁶ [COM-2023-100_en.pdf](#)