



2018/2035(INI)

2.7.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on a European strategy for plastics in a circular economy
(2018/2035(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: John Flack

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas enormous quantities of plastic and microplastics enter the sea, where, having been discarded, they break down in the water and subsequently enter the food chain, where toxic compounds are ingested by a wide range of marine life and can poison and cause death to living marine resources, as well as have a direct impact on human health; whereas marine plastic litter can also have an impact on the efficiency of fishing gear which, in the case of small-scale fishing, is even greater and causes economic problems;
- B. whereas the issue of plastic marine litter is a global challenge that can only be tackled by international cooperation;
- C. whereas Resolution 11 of the UN Environment Assembly of the UN Environment Programme of 23-27 May 2016 recognised that ‘the presence of plastic litter and microplastics in the marine environment is a rapidly increasing serious issue of global concern that needs an urgent global response taking into account a product life-cycle approach’;
- D. whereas the same resolution encouraged product manufacturers and others ‘to eliminate or reduce the use of primary microplastic particles in products’; whereas bans on the use of microplastics in specific personal care products have been put in place in the United States and Canada; whereas several Member States have notified the Commission of draft laws to ban microplastics in certain cosmetics, and whereas the Commission has requested that the European Chemicals Agency restrict intentionally added microplastics; whereas the Council has also called on the Commission to take measures on microplastics, especially those from cosmetics and detergents; whereas there is considerable confusion among consumers related to plastics terminology, particularly as regards bioplastics and biodegradable and bio-based plastics, and clear information from plastics producers is critical to delivering on the plastics strategy;
- E. whereas the Commission is committed to developing, where appropriate, product requirements under the Ecodesign Directive¹ that take account of microplastics, and it also has developed criteria to improve the recyclability of plastics in its Ecolabel and Green Public Procurement criteria;
- F. whereas solutions for tackling marine plastics cannot be isolated from an overall plastics strategy; whereas Article 48 of the Fisheries Control Regulation², which contains measures designed to promote the retrieval of lost fishing gear, is a step in the right direction, but is too limited in scope, given that Member States are allowed to exempt the vast majority of fishing vessels from this obligation and implementation of the reporting requirements remains poor;
- G. whereas the Member States are signatories to the International Convention for the

¹ OJ L 285, 31.10.2009, p. 10.

² OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and should aim for full implementation of its provisions;

- H. whereas ghost fishing occurs when lost or abandoned, non-biodegradable fishing nets, traps and lines catch, entangle, injure, starve and cause the death of marine life; whereas the phenomenon of ‘ghost fishing’ is brought about by the loss and abandonment of fishing gear; whereas the Fisheries Control Regulation requires the mandatory marking of gear and the notification and retrieval of lost gear; whereas some fishermen therefore bring back to port, on their own initiative, lost nets retrieved from the sea;
- I. whereas although it is difficult to accurately assess the precise contribution of aquaculture to marine litter, it is estimated that 80 % of marine debris is plastic and microplastic, and that somewhere between 20 % and 40 % of that marine plastic litter is partly linked to human activities at sea, including commercial and cruise ships, with the rest originating on land, and whereas, according to a recent FAO study¹, around 10 % comes from lost and discarded fishing gear; whereas lost and discarded fishing gear is one component of marine plastic litter and an estimated 94 % of the plastic that enters the ocean ends up on the sea floor, hence the need to use the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in order for fishermen to partake directly in ‘fishing for marine litter’ schemes, by providing them with payment or other financial and material incentives;
1. Welcomes the Commission communication entitled ‘A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy’ (COM(2018)0028), which supports the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive², which aims to achieve good environmental status for European marine waters; regrets, however, that the implementation of Article 48(3) of the Fisheries Control Regulation on retrieval and reporting obligations regarding lost fishing gear did not feature in the Commission’s 2017 evaluation and implementation report; stresses the need for a detailed assessment of the implementation of the requirements of the Fisheries Control Regulation in terms of fishing gear;
 2. Stresses that understanding and tackling marine litter requires a series of interlinked and ambitious multilevel actions and calls, therefore, for the EU and the Member States to improve the coordination of international efforts to reduce the forms of marine pollution and to step up global measures against plastic, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goal 14); points out that efforts may include campaigns and programmes to raise awareness of the impact of waste on marine ecosystems, research into the feasibility of biodegradable/compostable fishing nets, education projects for fishermen and specific public programmes to remove plastics and other objects from the seabed, as well as looking into the viability of extended producer responsibility for fishing gear;
 3. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to support plans for the collection of litter at sea with the involvement, where possible, of fishing vessels, and to introduce port reception and disposal facilities for marine litter, as well as a recycling scheme for end-of-life nets; calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the recommendations found in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing

¹ [Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear](#)

² OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

Gear, liaising closely with the fishing sector to fight ghost fishing;

4. Stresses that Member States and the regions must do more to formulate strategies and plans to reduce the loss of fishing gear at sea and that EMFF grants should be used for the collection and removal of marine waste and marine litter, as well as the setting-up of gear-recycling schemes and the necessary infrastructure; encourages the Member States and the regions, in conjunction with the EMFF, to submit proposals under the Horizon 2020 programme; points out that Member States may also wish to implement a voluntary bonus scheme for fishermen who bring back plastic waste and lost or obsolete nets; strongly encourages the Commission and the Member States to provide more support for existing initiatives to tackle this global challenge, such as 'Fishing for litter', 'Oceana', the 'Surfrider Foundation', the 'Plastic Oceans Foundation', the 'Mission Blue' initiative and 'One world, one ocean';
5. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to support the use of innovative fishing gear by encouraging fishermen to 'trade in' old nets and to adapt existing nets with net trackers and sensors linked to smart phone apps, radio frequency identification chips and vessel trackers so that skippers can keep more accurate track of their nets and retrieve them if necessary; acknowledges the role that technology can play in preventing plastic waste entering the sea;
6. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to enhance data collection in the area of marine plastics by establishing and implementing an EU-wide mandatory digital reporting system for gear lost by individual fishing vessels in support of recovery action, using data from regional databases to share information on a European database managed by the Fisheries Control Agency or to develop SafeSeaNet into a user-friendly, EU-wide system, allowing fishermen to signal lost gear;
7. Microplastics are detrimental to fish stocks, biodiversity and human health; calls, therefore, on the Commission to develop and support capacities to detect and monitor microplastic contamination levels in commercial fish, seafood products and the marine environment and its biological resources; calls on the Commission to adopt food safety risk-analysis frameworks to evaluate hazards and risks to consumers; calls on the Commission, in line with the principle of substitution and the REACH procedures for restricting substances that pose a risk to the plastics strategy, to follow through, as a matter of urgency, with the process requested by the Council to restrict the use of intentionally added microplastics, by requesting that the European Chemicals Agency review the scientific basis for taking regulatory action at EU level to bring about a gradual reduction in the use of microplastics in goods such as cosmetics, personal care products, detergents and paints, leading to a total ban; stresses the importance of cooperation between Member States, national and regional authorities, industry and stakeholders concerned with the effects of microplastic and nanoplastic contamination and the impact of pollution on fisheries, aquaculture and seafood supply chains.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	20.6.2018						
Result of final vote	<table><tr><td>+: </td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>–: </td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>0: </td><td>1</td></tr></table>	+:	20	–:	0	0:	1
+:	20						
–:	0						
0:	1						
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, David Coburn, Richard Corbett, Linnéa Engström, João Ferreira, Sylvie Goddyn, Mike Hookem, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ní Riada, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas						
Substitutes present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Giuseppe Ferrandino, John Flack, Seán Kelly, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Ana Miranda						

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

20	+
ALDE	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Norica Nicolai
ECR	John Flack, Remo Sernagiotto
EFDD	David Coburn, Mike Hookem
GUE/NGL	Liadh Ní Riada
PPE	Carlos Iturgaiz, Seán Kelly, Werner Kuhn, Gabriel Mato
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Richard Corbett, Ulrike Rodust, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Linnéa Engström, Ana Miranda

0	-

1	0
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention