

Press Release
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Conference on a Future EU Maritime Policy

A Conference on the Green Paper on a Future EU Maritime Policy was held yesterday in the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, organized by the European Parliament Intergroup on Sustainable Development with the Support of the Committee of the Regions.

At the start of the conference Commissioner Borg presented the Green Paper and Commissioner Dimas talked of the environmental aspects of the Paper. The conference chaired by Struan Stevenson (MEP) with a support of other MEPs gathered stakeholders from the private and public sectors related to maritime activities and gave an overview of first impressions after the Commission's publication of the Green Paper 7th June in the presence of Members of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and representatives of the European Commission.

During the whole day event 25 speakers representing different sectors (fisheries and aquaculture, shipping and transport industries, regional bodies, trade unions, environmental NGOs and others) expressed their first reactions on the Green Paper.

All participants welcomed the document as a very important piece of work recognizing the need for moving towards an integrated, holistic approach to managing all human activities at seas and oceans. They congratulated Commissioner Borg excellent results and constructive solutions helping to find balance between various users of the sea ensuring sustainability, economic growth, employment, safety and security.

The need for striking a balance between the protection of marine environment and economic growth was stressed. The need for strengthening and investing more on research and technology, thus improving knowledge on marine ecosystem, was also underlined.

There were different views expressed by the different stakeholders, i.e. IUCN stressed the need for implementing the ecosystem based approach, for increasing MPAs in sensitive habitats; WWF stressed the need for indicators measuring success and proper implementation of the Bird, Water, Habitat directives. Rosa Miguelez (MEP) stressed the need to promote employment at sea for young people. Off-shore wind energy was also discussed as source of great potential as a future energy source. Participants welcomed the references to the ILO (International Labour Organization). The need to work in the international perspectives was also evoked. All participants recognized the importance of Maritime Clusters as significant element for moving forward with the Maritime Policy. The role of the regions as well as the importance of the international dimension was stressed (in terms of food supply, transport, energy, employment, recreation, trade). The basis of all of these aspects is a healthy marine environment.

The need to conciliate safety and competitiveness as well as the conflict between flag and port state were discussed.

Participants recognized that the conference was the very first opportunity for an exchange of view among various stakeholders and they looked forward to much more in depth analysis of the Paper during the up-coming thirteen-month consultation.

Concerning the consultation of the European Parliament on the Green paper Mr. Stevenson mentioned in his conclusion that it was going to be very difficult, because there are five different committees involved. He strongly supported and recommended the currently proposed establishment of a Temporary Committee to deal with the Green Paper on the Maritime Policy.