Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Recommendation concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe'

(2001/C 155/05)

On 11 September 2000 the Commission decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the above-mentioned proposal.

The Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 13 March 2001. The rapporteur was Mr Bento Gonçalves.

At its 380th plenary session of 28 and 29 March 2001 (meeting of 28 March), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 100 votes in favour and one abstention.

1. Introduction

1.1. The draft European Parliament and Council Recommendation concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe [1] (ICZM) is based principally on the Communication from the Commission containing the Report on the progress of the ICZM Demonstration Programme [2], and on the Communication from the Commission on ICZM — A strategy for Europe [3].

1.1.1. The recommendation puts forward proposals on integrated national and Community strategies for ICZM, focusing on the Treaty objectives. The primary aim is to promote sustainable development while conserving available resources as part of an environmentally-aware approach.

1.1.2. The Demonstration Programme covered a number of projects implemented in 35 representative coastal regions in Europe and six horizontal thematic studies.

1.2. *Historical importance*

1.3. Throughout history, coastal zones have attracted human settlement and sustained development. They continue to offer considerable development potential to modern societies, performing major, multi-faceted functions: agricultural production, fish farming, fishery catches, leisure activities, nature and biodiversity conservation, biotechnology-based production, etc.

2. General comments

2.1. The draft recommendation highlights:

a) the social, economic, environmental and cultural importance of coastal zones for the EU;

b) the continuing and severe deterioration of Europe's coastal zones, as demonstrated by the European Environment Agency's report;

c) the need to implement an environmentally sustainable, economically equitable, socially responsible and culturally sensitive management scheme for such zones in order to maintain the full integrity of these resources;

d) the insistence of all earlier Commission communications on this subject [4] that integrated management must ensure that all the relevant players are involved;

e) the need to ensure coherent actions at European level, including cooperative interregional action, to help resolve problems affecting cross-border coastal zones, integrating them for this purpose into actions under the Interreg Community initiative;

f) earlier Council resolutions [5] identifying the need for concerted European action;

g) the Commission communication's proposal [6] for an ICZM Demonstration Programme, which has in the meantime been implemented;

(1) COM(2000) 545 final.
(2) COM(1997) 744.
(3) COM(2000) 547 final.
(4) COM(1997) 744 final and COM(2000) 547 final.
(5) Council Resolutions 92/C 59/01 and 94/C 135/02.
(6) COM(95) 511 final.

h) the fact that in accordance with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles set out in Community legislation, and given the diversity of conditions in the coastal zones and the relevant legal structures in the Member States, the action requires Community-level guidance in order to be effective.

2.1.1. ICZM is a dynamic, on-going and interactive process aimed at promoting sustainable management of coastal zones, by seeking to strike a lasting balance between their inherent ecological vulnerability and all the benefits of exploiting their various aspects.

2.1.2. The recommendation and the communication present a European strategy to flesh out the content of the EU Demonstration Programme [1], on which the Committee commented in its opinion of 11 July 1996 [2]. The comments on the present proposal carry forward the Committee's positions on the Demonstration Programme, which arose from an initiative by, and cooperation between, the Environment, Fisheries and Regional Policy DGs, and involving the Joint Research Centre.

3. **Specific comments**

3.1. *A Common Vision (I)*

3.1.1. The Committee generally agrees with this point. It would, however, suggest broadening its scope:

a) to ensure that economic opportunities are available to the zones in question and to promote initiatives leading to lasting jobs, provided that objectives reflecting the unique environmental features of coastal zones and their biophysical fragility are adhered to;

b) to ensure that action to exploit these zones economically respects the social and cultural identity of local communities;

c) to guarantee that adequate amounts of open land are set aside and developed for future enjoyment by the entire community, under balanced and sustainable environmental and landscape policies which also give consideration to the use of environmental exploitation approaches;

d) given the physical and environmental vulnerability of coastal zones, to promote and safeguard the integrity of the ecosystem, and sustainable management of both fish stocks on the continental shelf and the flora and fauna of the coastal zone and surrounding areas;

e) to extend the integrated management approach so as to incorporate the more remote inland sea areas and the hinterlands of coastal areas, throughout Europe.

3.2. *Principles (II)*

The Committee would make the following comments:

a) the Commission emphasises that the coastal zone management model must be applied in a broad, long-term perspective, drawing in all the social and economic players in these zones. The duration and impact of phenomena particular to coastal zones are not immediately clear. Their effects are also influenced by upstream human actions. Climate change too can trigger reactions which jeopardise the dynamics and stability of coastal zones, as in the case of the currently rising sea levels, caused by higher temperatures, which disrupt the coastal equilibrium;

b) the proposal argues that coastal zone management should be interactive and adaptive in response to new data generated by analysis of how coastal zones work;

c) coastal zone phenomena are influenced, or even determined, by upstream activities. Management strategies must therefore take account of local factors: economic players, local populations, existing ecosystems and their level of stability/fragility, possible upstream influences, aggressive impacts within the coastal zone (including transport of polluting or hazardous materials; overfishing; and discharge of effluents harmful to biodiversity);

d) all these factors must be addressed and quantified in input/output terms in order to plan coastal zone activities with the involvement of all the relevant players;

e) the management model, while essentially being environment-based and taking account of the fragility and vulnerability of coastal zones, must not stray too far from economic and social aspects, as mentioned earlier. An example of this is the Rance estuary model, which

[1] COM(95) 511 final.
[2] OJ C 295, 7.10.1996.

harnesses wave power to generate electricity and also uses the silt to produce raw materials for the building industry and organic compost fertilisers for agricultural use. Other comparable European experiences might be identified, as the related know-how should be brought to bear in other areas (e.g. the Netherlands' experience with using advanced technologies to restore polders);

f) coastal zone management must be based on systems under which factors harmful to the physical environment, biodiversity or the balance of terrestrial and marine ecosystems can be monitored permanently. Appropriate analytical methods, satellite remote sensing systems and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) are essential tools in integrated management of coastal zones.

3.3. *National Stocktaking (III)*

3.3.1. The Committee suggests amending point 2 as follows:

'Stocktaking should cover all administrative levels (local, regional and national), as well as identify the responsibilities and functions of the "social partners" who are representative of citizens and their socio-economic organisations'.

3.3.2. In describing and analysing coastal areas, all aspects of overall regional development policies — including the rural element — must be explored and if possible brought into association: economic, social, research, education, vocational training and job creation, and resource and waste management policies.

3.3.2.1. All the data gathered must be processed with a view to an integrated approach to coastal areas, providing the foundations for a comprehensive policy helping to consolidate economic, social and environmental sustainability.

3.4. *National Strategies (IV), Cooperation (V) and Reporting (VI)*

3.4.1. The Committee generally welcomes the guiding principles as set out in the proposal. The future reports should also contain all physical and financial implementation indicators, including *ex-ante* and *ex-post* evaluations.

4. Recommendations/suggestions for consideration in formulating ICZM planning options

4.1. ICZM must be specially concerned with protecting water in both the sea and water courses flowing into it. Water is the sector which will come under the greatest human pressure, influencing the development of all socio-economic sectors. In consequence, management of water quality and its use as a resource will be one of the 21st century's strategic issues and must be taken on board in ICZM.

4.1.1. Climate change, triggered by rising ambient temperatures (the greenhouse effect), is increasing evaporation rates and loss of water reserves; the Committee considers that ICZM should look closely at the approach to water savings in rivers and up-stream reservoirs. This should include testing new crop systems which minimise water consumption.

4.1.2. Scientists acknowledge the close link between stormy sea conditions, floods and rising air temperatures, which will affect the territorial stability of coastal zones. The Committee believes that ICZM must include spatial planning and land-use standards which reflect these new circumstances, without prejudice to the need for a land-use policy for coastal zones.

4.2. There has been a marked rise in the use of marine plants and animals in biotechnological research for the treatment of a wide range of diseases. The Committee is convinced that ICZM should be largely directed to conserving marine organisms in coastal areas.

4.3. ICZM must be more than a political commitment: it should be put into practical effect. The Commission should implement long-term strategies incorporating economically, socially and ecologically sustainable development.

4.3.1. The Committee's view is that ICZM should also cover action aimed at restoring coastal zones, particularly through the reintroduction of wild birds and replenishment of marine fauna resources. Environmental control should be backed up with monitoring, and estuaries and other coastal zones should be cleared of pollution (examples of this are the restoration of the Tagus estuary and the surrounding wetland areas and the restoration of the Guadalquivir estuary).

5. **Conclusions**

5.1. The Committee recalls and repeats the conclusions of its earlier opinion on this subject [1], which remain valid.

5.2. Planning and development in coastal zones depends on a Community and national level approach to the process. A range of budgetary resources (Community and national) must be available for funding ICZM implementation. This will enable the funds, structural and otherwise, to be tapped, applying the additionality and complementarity principles.

5.2.1. The financial package for implementing coastal zone initiatives should be drawn from the Structural Funds and from Community initiatives such as Interreg [2], without adding to its overall volume, under a legal framework similar to that for the Cohesion Fund. Member State projects should be submitted in the form of sub-programmes, geared to the specific objectives of sustainable coastal zone management, as previously identified by the Demonstration Programme.

5.2.2. Partnerships should be encouraged, drawing in all the public and private sectors, through their sectoral associations (social partners and other citizens' organisations) with a view to interesting them in planned initiatives in coastal zones and their funding.

5.3. The Committee supports the creation of a Community-level management and coordination unit for future action in coastal zones, bringing together the various Directorates-General involved in the process on an intersectoral basis.

5.3.1. In addition, each Member State should set up its own national ICZM unit and corresponding monitoring committee, comprising representatives of the social partners and of the scientific community, to monitor project implementation within its territory and coordinating with other countries' management units at Community level.

5.4. Given the encouraging results of the Demonstration Programme [3], the Commission could have submitted more practical proposals to resolve the numerous problems which have already been identified, in order to ensure that current decisions do not restrict future options.

5.4.1. The manifold importance of coastal zones and their natural resources (sea- and land-based) means they have a key role to play in meeting the needs and aspirations of Europe's present and future population.

5.4.2. Measures restricting improper and intensive use must be put in place, as such uses exacerbate unsustainable pressures which are incompatible with coastal zones' ecological fragility.

5.4.3. The following means of control are proposed for this purpose:

— monitoring of the pressures brought to bear on these zones;

— adjusting land-use regulations in coastal zones so that urban development is kept within sustainable and environment-friendly limits and ensuring that large natural open spaces are preserved;

— establishing a clear and robust legal framework to deter improper use of coastal zones which would destroy their fragile ecosystems.

5.5. Clearer details are needed of the policies to be implemented by the Member States or third countries or regions with coastal zones sharing a border with the EU, or crossed by rivers which flow into such zones. The Committee considers the importance of training, information and dissemination of initiatives within ICZM to be evident.

5.6. The Committee considers that the establishment of an information exchange centre (of an observatory type) for countries with coastal zones should be promoted, as part of ICZM.

5.6.1. This forum should draw in the economic and social partners involved in coastal zone issues, including the scientific and research community, training bodies, local and regional authorities and representatives of each Member State's central authorities, to discuss all questions affecting these zones from every point of view, against a framework encompassing global objectives and concrete future action.

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(1) OJ C 295, 7.10.1996.

(2) Annex II of the Communication from the Commission to the Member States C(2000) 1101 of 28.4.2000.

(3) COM(1997) 744.

5.6.2. The Committee believes that all Member States involved in ICZM should prepare reports on the working methods adopted, the results of initiatives, the degree of involvement of the social partners, etc. The reports would be one of the sources of information for discussion at meetings of the information exchange centre.

5.7. The Committee therefore welcomes the work accomplished with the demonstration programmes and believes it should continue: the strategy to be employed should also comply with the overall guidelines of Council Resolution 94/C 135/02.

Brussels, 28 March 2001.

The President

of the Economic and Social Committee

Göke FRERICHS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Directive on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof'

(2001/C 155/06)

On 25 July 2000 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the above-mentioned proposal.

The Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 7 March 2001. The rapporteur was Mrs Cassina.

At its 380th plenary session (meeting of 28 March 2001), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion with 101 votes in favour, no dissenting votes and one abstention.

1. Introduction and content of the proposal

1.1. The Commission adopted the proposal on 24 May 2000, in accordance with the relevant Treaty provisions [1] and pursuant to the mandate of the Tampere European Council. The need for an instrument to handle mass influxes of displaced persons from third countries has been highlighted in recent years by the arrival of large numbers of displaced persons from Bosnia and Kosovo. However, the proposal — which implements a Treaty provision — seeks to do more than just respond to a particular set of events; in tandem with other proposed and/or adopted instruments, it seeks to equip the Union with a comprehensive policy on visas, asylum and immigration.

1.2. The proposal establishes a temporary, exceptional instrument to deal with mass influxes of displaced persons from third countries who are unable to return to their country of origin without risking their life, liberty or dignity. The proposal consists of a set of minimum standards, both procedural and substantive, and measures to ensure a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving displaced persons and bearing the consequences thereof.

1.3. The aims of the proposal are as follows:

— to guarantee that when Member States deal with mass influxes of displaced persons, their procedures and actions respect a minimum common standard, so as to avoid the risk of distorting the spontaneous choice of host country;

[1] The main legal basis is Article 63(2)(a) and (b) of the Treaty.