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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional
Planning

on the problem of coastal erosion in the European Community

Rapporteur: Mr J. HUME

1.23

On 15 November 1979 Mr CRONIN tabled a motion for a resolution (Doc. 1-522/79) on coastal erosion.

At its sitting of 16 November 1979 the European Parliament referred this motion for a resolution to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning as the committee responsible and to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Budgets for their opinions.

At its meeting of 20 March 1980 the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning appointed Mr HUME rapporteur.

It considered the draft report at its meeting of 22 January 1981 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement.

Present : Mr De Pasquale, chairman; Mr Griffiths, (deputizing for the rapporteur); Mrs Boot, Mr Cecovini, Mr Harris, Mr Hutton, Mr Peponis and Mr Travaglini.

The opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection is attached.

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The Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement :

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the problems of coastal erosion in the European Community

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the motion for a resolution (Doc. 1-522/79),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection (Doc. 1-830/80),
 - having regard to the extensive coastal regions of the Member States of the Community, which, because of their peripheral position, are in many cases among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the Community,
 - concerned at the considerable damage to these coastlines each year due to erosion,
 - conscious of the significant economic and natural losses resulting from this damage, especially to agricultural and touristic areas,
 - convinced that the pooling of knowledge and experience in the fight against coastal erosion will lead to a significant cutback in losses,
1. Calls on the Community to cooperate closely in the fight against coastal erosion;
 2. Asks that the necessary arrangements be made to collect and share existing knowledge and experience in this field;
 3. Calls on the Commission to proceed more rapidly with its ecological mapping of the Community and to submit the results as soon as possible to the Council and Parliament;
 4. Calls on the Community to intensify and coordinate research in this field;
 5. Hopes that the Commission, when considering the Member States' regional development programmes, will take account of the ecological vulnerability of certain coastal regions and allocate funds from the ERDF accordingly;
 6. Calls on the Commission to make financial aid available for research into the control of coastal erosion, pilot projects and practical measures to prevent coastal erosion;
 7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the explanatory statement to the Council and the Commission of the European Community, the Council of Europe and the Conference of Peripheral Coastal Regions in the Community.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTCoastal erosion

1. It should first of all be pointed out that the phenomenon of coastal erosion in the Community must be regarded first and foremost as a problem of environmental protection. It would be only reasonable, therefore, to expect the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection, which has been asked for an opinion, to consider the problem in greater detail.

2. The extent and seriousness of erosion of the Community's coasts has been the subject of very little research to date. The same is true of the cause of this phenomenon. How many hectares of littoral are lost each year in the Community is not known, nor is the extent of the associated financial losses to agriculture, industry, energy institutions, private property, tourism and the State.

3. The impact of coastal erosion varies from area to area. While virtually the whole of the North Sea coast is affected, and also certain sections of Europe's Atlantic coast and the Irish Sea, erosion of the Mediterranean coasts is of less significance. The length of coast affected by erosion in the Community may be estimated at some 1,100 km. Large parts of the more vulnerable regions (some 600 km) are areas singled out for aid from the ERDF (Northern Scotland, Southern Scotland, the North of England, Wales, South East Ireland, the Baltic and North Sea coasts of Germany, North and South Jutland, Nord-Pas-De-Calais, Pays de la Loire, Provence-Côte d'Azur).

However, the coastal area of South-East England, the English Channel coast, the coast between Venice and Trieste and La Spezia and Livorno, which are also badly affected, are not among the ERDF development areas.

4. The multiple factors underlying coastal erosion and in particular the interaction between them have not been widely investigated up to now. They include water, waves, wind, frost, ocean currents, tides, changes in sea-level, land water drainage levels, geological factors and subsidence. In addition, a number of human factors obviously play a not inconsiderable rôle:

- destruction of the natural vegetation (woodland, turf, etc.,) by urban development, industrialization, road-building or intensive farming, etc.,
- destruction of vegetation by tourist traffic
- removal of sand and pebbles for building
- disposal of refuse and waste
- incorrect location or design of coastal protection structures.

5. The Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning is particularly interested in those erosion-producing factors which come into play as a result of measures to promote the development of disadvantaged regions.

The extent to which mistaken regional development policies may aggravate the problem of coastal erosion is largely unknown.

6. Therefore, the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning supports Mr CRONIN's motion for a resolution and calls on the Commission to devote more attention to the phenomenon of coastal erosion in the Community.

In order to make it possible to assess the environmental impact of regional policy in coastal areas there must be proper maps of the vulnerable areas, together with a detailed examination of the relationship between the contributory factors.

The Commission began this work in 1974¹ with a survey of the current state of research in the Member States. It should be encouraged to intensify this work.

7. At the same time, the Conference of Peripheral Coastal Regions in the Community in its draft of a European charter for coastal areas should pay attention to the problem of coastal erosion as well as to the still more serious threat of coastal pollution.

8. The Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning calls on the Commission, to draw up proposals for an integrated plan for highly eroded and disadvantaged coastal regions, which will strike a balance between the demands of economic development in these regions and the need to protect them from ecological damage.

¹ see 1. EEC Scientific and Technical Research Committee, Study Group on Oceanology, 'Protecting the coast and seabed from erosion'

2. Commission of the European Community : Integrated Management of Coastal Areas of the European Community, ENV/465/78-EN

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND CONSUMER
PROTECTION

Draftsman : Miss G. D. HOOPER

On 20.12.79 the Committee on Environment, Public Health and
Consumer Protection appointed Miss Gloria HOOPER draftsman.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 22 October 1980,
and adopted it unanimously.

Present: Mr Alber, vice-chairman; Mr Johnson, vice-chairman;
Miss Hooper, draftsman of the opinion; Mrs Krouwel-Vlam, Mrs Lenz-Cornette,
Mrs Maij-Weggen, Mr Mertens, Mr Nyborg (deputizing for Mr Remilly),
Mrs Schleicher, Mr Sherlock, Sir Peter Vanneck and Mr Verroken.

I. GENERAL COMMENTS

1. The condition of parts of the European Community's coastline threatened with erosion has reached a critical stage, the total causes and effects of which require serious consideration. This is not only because of damage caused by long term coastal erosion to the amenity and scenic value of certain areas, nor indeed because of the irreversible ecological consequences and urgent need to protect flora and fauna, but also because of the danger to human life , e.g. in the hazardous isolation of a gas main and gas works on Humberside. Whilst the causes of coastal erosion may be natural or the result of man's exploitation of resources or an inter-relation between both , the Committee notes that the Motion for Resolution under consideration refers only to damage caused by adverse weather conditions.

2. Coastal erosion and its prevention have hitherto been regarded in the Community as a national problem of land protection, conservation of the environment, regional planning and regional policy. Neither the Community's environmental policy nor its regional policy as yet includes any programme to study the causes and to assist in schemes to prevent coastal erosion. This does not, however, mean that the general problems of land management and regional planning in coastal areas have been ignored at Community level. Mention should be made in particular of the following activities :

3. The second action programme of the European Communities on the environment¹ contains a section on European regional planning and environmental policy in coastal areas. The action programme refers to the need to apply international principles of integrated regional planning and environmental policy in coastal regions of the European Community. These principles are set out in the recommendations of the Council of Europe of 26 October 1973 and in those of the OECD of 12 October 1976.

4. In the abovementioned action programme the Commission undertook to submit proposals to the Council on the application of the principles formulated by the Council of Europe and the OECD in the Community. In addition it commissioned two case studies on integrated coastal planning on the coast of Brittany and in Apulia, which have since been completed.

¹ OJ C 139, 13.6.1977, p.25

5. Problems have arisen, however, as regards the intention of adopting the OECD and Council of Europe principles. In its communication to the Council of 7 May 1980 on the progress made in connection with the environment action programme in the European Community¹, the Commission refers to problems of coordination between the numerous regional, national and international bodies which are responsible for coastal protection. A further problem is the fact that coastal protection impinges on a number of different sectoral policies (e.g. oceanology, regional planning, the environment, conservation of nature, agriculture, regional policy, etc..).

The Commission therefore believes that a "general strategy" is needed, possibly in the form of "a European charter", to provide a coherent basis for the various policies.

6. These ideas are defined more closely in a subsequent communication from the Commission of 7 May 1980 (COM (80) 253 final). In this communication, which deals with land management and its role in Community environmental policy, coastal erosion is mentioned as one of many natural hazards to the landscape and the environment. The following goals are cited for feasible and necessary protective measures :

- better practical understanding of natural phenomena, the circumstances which trigger them, their effects on each other and the scope for action (see current Commission work on ecological mapping of Europe),
- creation of an appropriate framework for assisting areas threatened by long term natural hazards ('general strategy', 'European Charter for coastal regions'), in addition to the strategy required to meet emergency situations caused by major natural disasters eg. flooding,
- implementation of Community measures (specific projects) in priority sectors and regions.

7. On the basis of this communication, the Commission expects instructions from the Council to arrange for the measures listed to be implemented.

¹ COM (80) 222 final, p. 31

II. SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

8. The Committee, having noted that the Motion for Resolution refers only to erosion damage caused by adverse weather conditions and that similarly the Commission Communication refers to natural hazards, insists that, in view of the inter-relation between natural and man-made causes, Community action in relation to damage caused by coastal erosion should not be limited to erosion caused solely by adverse weather conditions.

9. The Committee supports paragraphs 1 and 2 of the motion for a resolution. It considers that, particularly in the field of research into causes and preventative measures, Community cooperation and the pooling of existing knowledge and experience is vital.

10. A new paragraph 2a should be inserted after paragraph 2 of the motion for a resolution :

"2a. Calls on the Commission to proceed more rapidly with its ecological mapping of the Community and to submit the results as soon as possible to the Council and Parliament."

11. In relation to paragraph 3, the Committee wishes to emphasize that coastal erosion does not necessarily coincide geographically with the Community's Regional Policy. Therefore it suggests that the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning, as the Committee responsible, should consider the extension of the non-quota section of the Regional Fund to cover endangered coastal regions not designated as ERDF development areas.

12. As a supplementary measure and because the Committee recognises the budget limitations on any expansion of the Regional Fund, the Committee wishes to emphasize again the need to set up a European Environmental Fund; the following paragraph 3a should therefore be added :

"3a. Stresses again on this occasion the need and urgency for a European Environmental Fund to be set up which could inter alia assume responsibility for promoting projects to prevent or contain coastal erosion in areas where conservation of flora and fauna is of prime importance."

13. In general, the Committee supports the Commission's proposals concerning coastal erosion as set out in the communication from the Commission of 4 May 1980 (COM(80) 253 Final) and stresses the urgency for obtaining and implementing proposals in this respect.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (Doc. 1-522/79)
tabled by Mr CRONIN
pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure

on coastal erosion

The European Parliament

- having regard to the extensive coastlines of the Member States of the Community,
 - concerned at the extensive damage, in particular erosion, to these coastlines each year by adverse weather conditions,
 - conscious of the significant economic and natural losses as a result of this damage, especially to agricultural and touristic areas,
 - convinced that the pooling of knowledge and experience in the fight against coastal erosion will lead to a significant cutback in losses,
1. Calls on the Community to cooperate fully in the fight against coastal erosion;
 2. Asks that the necessary arrangements be made to collect and share existing knowledge and experience in this field;
 3. Calls on the Commission to propose the granting of EEC financial aid, e.g. from the EAGGF and Regional Development Funds, towards the costs of research into preventing coastal erosion, towards the costs of pilot projects and towards the costs of actual projects to prevent coastal erosion.