

Brussels, 26 April 2017

Strengthening the Blue Europe to the benefit of EU citizens.

We, the members of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup of the European Parliament, welcome the adoption of the Declaration of the European Ministers responsible for the Integrated Maritime Policy on Blue Growth. It will be a significant component of the Union's priorities for Jobs, Growth and Investment, and the forthcoming Presidency.

We reaffirm the central role our seas and oceans will play in our future in terms of development, employment, energy, our food system, well-being and climate change.

We share the Ministers' ambition to drive forward EU investments in key maritime sectors, especially through the European Fund for Strategic Investments and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, with the support of the other Structural Funds. We join their call to reinforce maritime training in Europe as a key pillar for the future of our Blue Economy.

Furthermore, we commend their call to build a safe and secure maritime space, a healthy environment and better governance of the sea.

In this context, we encourage the EU to continue to increase its efforts, initiated with the support of the Research Framework Programme, to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the importance of our seas and oceans.

The drive for a Blue Europe is a great challenge. It demands the support of all coastal and non-coastal territories and all of Europe's citizens.

Therefore, the members of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup call for the creation of a European Ocean Literacy Structure as a platform for better understanding of the sea. By providing education about the importance of the oceans for our lives, as well as our impact on the life of the oceans, the Structure will contribute to broader civic engagement in maritime affairs.

Finally, we express our support for the creation of a Maritime Committee in the European Parliament to consider the importance and cross-sectoral impact of maritime affairs. Creating this Committee would signal the important role our seas and oceans will play in the future of the EU.