

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0908/02
by Brigitte Langenhagen (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Duty charged retroactively on fisheries products from Norway

Problems have arisen in the past year in Germany with the charging of customs duty on Norwegian fisheries products. German customs authorities have begun to suspect in the course of checks on quantities that Norway could have over-fished its quotas (in particular of cod), and are now demanding payment of the difference between the concessionary (0.9%) and standard (7.5%) rates. These demands are being served on German importers or carriers although the latter cannot rightly be regarded as liable for payment, since they are not directly involved in the import-export trade as such. The traders concerned now confront serious economic difficulties in the face of demands running to several tens of thousand euro. The result is that affected traders are now putting pressure on their suppliers in Norway to export via Denmark or the Netherlands, because customs arrangements in those countries appear to be organised differently and retroactive duties or securities are not applied.

1. On the basis of what directive is customs duty being charged retroactively or the lodging of securities demanded?
2. What approaches are taken by other EU Member States to applying customs provisions compared with Germany?
3. Who is responsible for supervising compliance with such provisions?
4. Can the Commission see any potential here for equality of treatment in all Member States?
5. Are there currently any negotiations or agreements between Norway and the Commission that would rule out retroactively charging duty in this way?