

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2422/02
by Brigitte Langenhagen (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Surplus prawn-fishing capacity in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has disregarded the targets of its MAGP IV regarding prawn boats and, in recent years, has created a considerable amount of surplus capacity by building new vessels. According to the Netherlands fishing industry's newspaper, the target for 1993 was 2 812 GT / 10 318 KW. However, the capacity of the Netherlands prawn-fishing fleet in 2001 stood at 4 423 GT / 16 931 KW. Moreover, funds have been used to build new vessels which were granted for scrapping vessels, such as large flatfish boats, in other parts of the industry.

By acting in this manner, the Netherlands' prawn-fishing fleet has gained a considerable competitive edge. Even if the surplus capacity is cut back at the present time, there is a risk that only the older and less profitable units will be decommissioned. The Netherlands would have a rejuvenated fleet at its disposal while other Member States would continue to use boats over 30 years old only.

1. How does the Commission intend to force the Netherlands to reduce its surplus prawn-fishing capacity?
2. How does the Commission intend to prevent the competitive advantages gained over the other Member States' older vessels through the illegal building of new vessels being subsequently legalised through the new structural policy?
3. Can the Commission rule out the possibility that funds granted for reducing the Netherlands' flatfish fleet have been used to build new prawn boats? How does the Commission intend to punish such conduct?