

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3032/02

by Albert Maat (PPE-DE), Herman Vermeer (ELDR), Brigitte Langenhagen (PPE-DE), Niels Busk (ELDR) and Struan Stevenson (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Negotiations with Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Russia on the international distribution of blue whiting catch quotas

When will the next round of negotiations take place between the Community and non-member countries, such as Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands, on the distribution of catch quotas for blue whiting in the North-East Atlantic? Has the Commission made any progress in the negotiations with the non-member countries concerned during and since the last round of negotiations and, if so, what progress?

Does the Commission realise that the Community decision of July 1999 unilaterally to restrict blue whiting catch quotas for its own fishermen has resulted in the EU share of the catch (i.e. catches in EU waters plus EU catches in international waters) falling from approximately 65% in the period 1993 to 1997 to less than 20% today?

Is the Commission aware that the approach it has adopted hitherto has caused serious economic hardship to Community fishermen, whereas no progress whatsoever has been made in terms of the responsible management of blue whiting stocks and the Community's negotiating position has been seriously weakened by the drastic fall in its share of the catch?

Is the Commission aware that its attitude sends out the wrong signal to Community fishermen and will undermine the basis for responsible management? Does the Commission not also consider that the policy of unilaterally responsible fishing adopted by the Community may in fact be achieving quite the opposite of what is intended?

Will the Commission ensure in the near future that the historical fishing rights of the Community continue to be honoured?

Does the Commission not also believe that in the current situation other measures should be considered (additional catch quotas for Community fishermen, trade measures, etc), in order to reach an agreement that is consistent with the Community's historical fishing rights?

How does the Commission think that the evidently irresponsible approach taken by non-member countries to fishing for blue whiting in the negotiations on the sharing out of blue whiting catch quotas can be remedied, so that Community fishermen are no longer being let down?