

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0212/04
by Simon Murphy (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Driftnets

Is the Commission aware that despite the EU ban on illegal driftnetting, on 27 March and 4 April 2003 the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry issued two decrees which allow fishers who have converted their 'spadare' driftnets (wide mesh driftnet used almost exclusively for swordfish) into 'ferrettare' (a smaller mesh driftnet) to add a 'reta da posta fissa' (a net that is launched and then sits there waiting for fish to get entrapped) not longer than 5km to their current gear, provided that they acquire an additional licence?

The Italian fishing industry has praised these decisions, while there has been strong opposition from environmentalists and the media.

There is also growing evidence that some Italian fishing vessel owners have created fishing cooperatives in Mediterranean countries outside the EU in order to continue their driftnet fishing undisturbed.

Would the Commission please provide details of its discussions with the Italian Government on these decrees and other concerns, and what action it plans to take to ensure full enforcement of the EU ban on driftnetting?