

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1015/04
by Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Shrimp fishing in Svalbard

Svalbard shrimp fishing by the Community fleet is seriously impeded by the obligation that no more than four EU fishing fleet units be present at any one time. This practice has been imposed for some years, and there is thus a danger that it will become established, with all the negative consequences it presupposes for the Community fleet, which is unable to take up the full fishing effort allocated to it yearly (519 days). Furthermore, this limitation is imposed in the brief months in which access can be had to the region, due to the adverse weather conditions which prevail there for most of the year. The Commission's reply of 8 May 2002 to my previous written question E-1037/02¹ stated that it was fully aware of the problems which the situation of the Svalbard shrimp fishery posed for the Member States concerned. In its reply to my question E-3581/03², it stated that 'The question of improved access conditions for the Community shrimp fleet fishing in the Svalbard area has been discussed with Norway on several occasions and most recently at a high level meeting in March 2003,' and continued 'Norway is not willing to consider an increase in fishing days but has indicated that they could consider an increase in the number of vessels allowed in the area at the same time. However, they link such an increase in the number of vessels with, for them, a satisfactory solution to a number of other outstanding issues, including improved conditions for Norwegian export of shrimp to the Union. The Commission has agreed with Norway to have a high level meeting again in principal [sic] in June 2004 to continue the dialogue and to find among other issues a satisfactory solution to the access problems for Community vessels fishing shrimp at Svalbard.'

Given that there has still been no progress whatever made and that certain Community fleets, e.g. the fleet working in NAFO, have seen their catches seriously reduced, which means that an additional effort to find alternatives is called for, is the Commission aware of the damage being done to the EU fleet by the currently dormant state of negotiations with Norway?

Since the EU fleet's sole request is for a greater fishing presence at any one time in the area in question, and Norway may possibly agree to this, does the Commission not believe that at this point, it would be appropriate to bring forward the high level meeting scheduled for June, so as to put an end to this very prejudicial situation as soon as humanly possible?

¹ OJ C 229 E, 26.9.2002, p. 172.

² OJ C