

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3252/08
by Iles Braghetto (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: State aid to counteract high price of diesel for fishing vessels

The fishing industry has been hard hit by the increase in the price of diesel, which has recently outstripped even that of petrol. Many fishermen claim that they are now operating at a loss.

Michel Barnier, the French Minister for Fisheries, has stated that he wants to use the six-month French Presidency of the EU to launch a debate on two themes: the impact of the increase in diesel prices on fishery activities and the 'more efficient' management of fishing quotas. It would therefore appear that the institutional climate in the coming months will be propitious to initiatives aimed at alleviating the short-term problems of the fishing industry. Mr Barnier has emphasised his belief that the right course to follow in matters of fisheries policy is, by necessity, the 'European' one.

Under the so-called 'Barnier Plan', EUR 310 million will be allocated to the French fishing industry over a two-year period.

The *de minimis* aid each Member State is authorised to grant currently stands at a total EUR 30 000 per undertaking over a three-year period. Given that the situation described above is not shaping up to be temporary, but is a structural one that will weigh chronically on the sector, it is clear that the doubling of diesel prices should entail a suitable and proportionate re-evaluation of the *de minimis* funding that can be granted.

Does the Commission not consider that Member States should be granted a fresh authorisation allowing them to make a suitable adjustment to *de minimis* aid? If so, can it indicate to what level it would be willing to allow *de minimis* aid to be raised?