

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3684/09
by Werner Langen (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Waste of fish stocks as a result of EU fishing quotas

Fishing involves by-catches, which include all marine species that are caught unintentionally in nets and on lines. In most Member States, these largely unprofitable by-catches are simply thrown back into the sea in order to keep the catch of quota fish low, since under EU rules the quotas take account only of the volume of fish actually recorded in port. This means that EU quotas are encouraging a serious waste of fish stocks. The thoughtless treatment of by-catches, which in fact make up around 40% of total catches, also makes a realistic assessment of fish stocks impossible. The fact that by-catches are thrown back into the sea means that it is not clear how much damage is being caused to protected species.

1. Why do EU fishing quotas not take account of the total catch, which would oblige the Member States to ensure that by-catches are also landed?
2. Why does the EU not use the valuable information that could be gained from by-catches, and why does it not close threatened fishing grounds, for example?
3. Why does the EU not follow scientists' advice and reduce the minimum sizes for fish or the minimum mesh sizes in order to bring about a general reduction in by-catches?