

**Question for written answer E-004073/2012  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Risks for the Sicilian fishing fleet

The entire fishing fleet of the island of Ustica in Sicily is occupying the municipal council chamber as a mark of protest, exasperated by the failure of the negotiations that should have mitigated the content of the Ministerial Decree of 21 September 2011 (GURI No 233 of 24 September 2011), adopted pursuant to European legislation, which reduced both the mesh size of nets (from 18 to 10 centimetres) and the species that can be fished.

These nets cost around EUR 20 000, a cost borne entirely by the fishermen, and do not allow swordfish, tuna or albacore to be caught, but only ope, mackerel and frigate mackerel, which are relatively unprofitable species considering the cost of fuel, which is currently sky high, and vessel maintenance.

Since the middle of March 2012, when the fishing season opened, not a single fishing-boat has gone to sea. The measure has paralysed the activity not only of Ustica's fishermen, but also of those of Isola delle Femmine, Termini Imerese, Santa Flavia-Porticello and the Aeolian Islands, etc., as well as threatening to impoverish operators in the ancillary economy (canned fish producers, traders, restaurateurs).

Ustica is not a member of the CoGePa fishing cooperative, and its fishermen cannot access the financial grants included in Measure 1.4 (small offshore fishing), nor those relating to aquaculture (not recommended in protected areas) or to whitebait fishing.

Can the Commission state whether it proposes:

1. To identify measures promptly in order to ensure that the fishermen of the island of Ustica and of other Sicilian fishing fleets are reimbursed for the costs incurred to purchase vessels and equipment?
2. To authorise the Municipality of Ustica, the managing authority of the protected marine area, within the limits of its territorial competence (12 miles) and in accordance with Implementing Regulation (EU) No 404/2011 ('fishing authorisations'), to carry out a scientific study of the species to be fished and the type of equipment to be used, in order to ensure the environmental sustainability of this specific region — but authorising the local fishermen to sell the product fished for research purposes so that they are compensated for the work done?