WRITTEN QUESTION P-3810/03
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to the Commission

Subject: EU rules on discarding healthy fish

The EU's quota arrangements for fishing by the Member States compel Danish fishermen each year to throw back into the North Sea approximately 500 000 tonnes of top-quality dead fish to the tune of EUR 25 million. This includes 45 000 tonnes of cod, which corresponds to approximately 14 million top-quality Danish codfish.

Recent weeks alone have seen 40 tonnes of sole discarded in the Danish sector of the Kattegat. Because of the existing rules the entire EU fishing fleet is discarding healthy fish in the North Sea to the tune of close on EUR 1 billion. Apart from cod and sole this also includes large quantities of lobster, turbot and plaice.

Firstly, this is an immoral waste of food, secondly, discarding dead fish in this way is environmental pollution and, thirdly, it renders all of the EU's attempts to limit the exploitation of fish stocks entirely absurd. The fish perish and fish stocks and their reproduction are harmed.

Where there is a need to restrict the exploitation of fishery resources, this could be done by limiting the number of fishermen's sea days once they have landed the quantity of fish which it is deemed reasonable to catch.

At the same time as resources are being destroyed in this absurd way, the EU allows fishermen from Norway and the Baltic countries that are not yet members of the EU to land substantial quantities of fish in Danish ports. It is said that the fisheries inspection checks on these non-EU fishing vessels are far laxer than the checks on landings from Danish fishing vessels.

The EU's amateurish attempts at controlling fishing are giving rise to widespread annoyance with the EU as a whole and create the impression of bureaucratic interference that runs directly counter to the stated objective.

What action does the Commission intend to take to prevent the wastage of fish and the destruction of the fishing industry as a result of the discarding of healthy fish?