



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/D.4/LC (2021)

Dear Mr Brouckaert,

I am referring to the letter of the North Western Waters Advisory Council of 22 March 2021. I understand that your letter represents the views of some of the Members of the North Western Waters Advisory Council. The letter refers to an explanatory note on the proposal for a revision of the EU-fisheries control regulation¹, prepared by the Commission services and circulated to some MEPs in February 2021 in advance to the plenary vote in the European Parliament. I met with representatives of EUROPECHE on 17 March 2021 and clearly explained the Commission's position.

I wish to reiterate that the Commission has full faith in the EU fishers and the EU fishing industry, and we will always defend the interests of fishermen that comply with the rules and contribute to sustainable fishing, and protect them against the unfair competition from anyone not complying.

It is the role and duty of the Commission to explain and to defend its proposal during the ordinary legislative procedure, to provide full and non-biased information and to steer the debate towards a positive outcome. The explanatory note provided all MEPs full information on the potential harmful impacts of some of the amendments of the PECH committee, well before the plenary debate and vote.

The position of the Commission is well known and quite clear: backtracking on the current fisheries control system, for example what concerns the margin of tolerance, should not be an option. Generous relaxation of the rules on the margin of tolerance will lead to misreporting by some operators and can lead to overfishing, creating substantial reputational risks for the EU. I am sure that the members of the North Western Waters

¹ COM(2018)368

Mr Emiel Brouckaert
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Advisory Council in particular will see what problems this could cause for them in the difficult context of annual negotiations with UK post-Brexit. It would pose equally great challenges for the EU to explain its position at international level where the EU is a leader in international ocean governance and fight against IUU.

I stand firmly behind our proposal for the revision, which is to have a modern, digital and future proof fisheries control system gaining from new technologies – e.g. remote electronic monitoring; continuous engine power monitoring; digital traceability – to facilitate fishers' and operators' compliance and also modernising monitoring and control by authorities.

The Commission will continue to work closely with and for the EU fishers, with the view to ensure a modern fisheries control system, which is essential to safeguard the long-term sustainability objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.

I would like to take the opportunity to say that I count on your continuing full cooperation with the Fisheries Control authorities to work towards future rules that are applied, monitored, controlled, enforced and if necessary sanctioned. This will ensure a level playing field amongst fishers and it will safeguard the health of fish stocks and the sustainability of the EU fishing industry.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

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