



EP(17)57

Brussels, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**To EU Parliament Members**

**RE: Letter concerning the new developments in the snow crab fishing conflict between EU and Kingdom of Norway in Svalbard**

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Europêche is writing to you with regards to the latest developments on the issue of the snow crab conflict in the Barents Sea, particularly in the Svalbard zone, between the EU and the Kingdom of Norway.

We are not satisfied with how the EU is handling the situation. Since the arrest of the Latvian crab fishing vessel *Senator* on 16 January 2017, the EU has not managed to move forward, not in the form of “informal talks” with Norway, nor in the form of formal actions that the EU could have taken in order to protect the legal rights of EU fishermen. At the same time, the EU fleet which consists of vessels flying flags of Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Spain, has to bear huge financial losses, being tied up in port.

Below you may find a list detailing the recent developments on the issue at hand that will provide better understanding of the current *status quo*:

- The decision of the Norwegian court on the *Senator* and the position of the Norwegian prosecuting authority completely deny the rights of 3<sup>rd</sup> country vessels to operate in Svalbard waters and insist on the Norwegian interpretation of the Treaty;
- The introduction of regulations and a snow crab quota by Norway from 1 July 2017, in which all the zones (the Norwegian EEZ, the Norwegian part of the NEAFC area and Svalbard) are united into one zone, also emphasises the non-recognition of the special status of Svalbard and the non-recognition of the EU position;
- The allocation of a quota of 500 tonnes not just for the EU but in general ‘for the purposes of agreements with other countries’ emphasises Norway’s position that it is its own resource and only Norway has a right to it;
- The figure of 500 tonnes is ridiculous since during a period of only eight months last year EU vessels caught at least 5,000 tonnes. It shows Norway’s refusal to seek real agreements;
- Norway’s recent belated response letter to the European Commission reiterating Norway’s old demands and confirmed Norway’s refusal to accept informal arrangements. In fact, in January 2017, at a meeting with Commissioner Vella, Minister Sandberg made very clear that Norway would not give the EU ‘*even a single crab*’. Moreover, in the letter Norway demanded the repeal of the European Regulation regarding crab permits as being considered illegal.

- By way of Regulation, in 2015, Norway introduced a fishing ban for snow crab in this area; while at the same time granting exemptions to 11 Norwegian vessels in 2015, 20 in 2016 and 50 in 2017.

We therefore cannot but clearly recognise that:

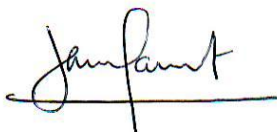
1. Norway insists on maintaining its position and shows no intention whatsoever to discuss and accept a reasonable compromise;
2. The Commission's approach of non-confrontation over the past eight months has failed entirely. It did not produce any results and the dossier has come to a complete standstill;
3. The political statement on the subject by MEP's towards Minister Sandberg during his visit to the European Parliament on 24 April 2017 has not led to any change in the position taken by the Norwegian government.

Under the abovementioned circumstances the industry calls for action and kindly requests the following of the European Parliament:

1. To confirm the official position of the EU on the Treaty of Paris (1920) and our rights to fish by issuing an official statement or parliamentary resolution;
2. To urge the Commission to stop its proven worthless attempts to persuade Norway and instead to take effective measures to ensure our rights so that we can fish on the basis of rights rather than on the basis of Norway's consent;
3. To request the Member States concerned to devise and propose supporting measures for the companies affected.

Europêche therefore urges the EU to take effective measures to save EU's snow crab fleet and the future of EU's involvement in this quickly developing multi-million industry. Without active intervention and support, the EU crab fleet will be wrecked by Norway's actions and the absence of an effective response by the EU.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Javier Garat', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Javier Garat  
President of Europêche