



P. NIKIFOROS DIAMANDOUROS

PRESS RELEASE NO. 4/2009

24 February 2009

Ombudsman urges Commission to correct error concerning fishing quotas

The European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, has asked the European Commission to correct an administrative error concerning fishing quotas in the West of Scotland. This followed a complaint from a Scottish fishermen's association about an EU Regulation concerning fishing quotas for the year 2007. During his investigation, the Ombudsman confirmed that the Commission had erroneously interchanged the data in two columns of a document which served as a basis for the Regulation. This mistake led to a reduction in the number of fishing days allocated for specific groups of vessels in the West of Scotland. The Ombudsman called on the Commission to correct its error in order not to risk any knock-on effects for subsequent years.

Background

Every year, the EU Council adopts a fishing plan for EU waters which allocates a certain number of fishing days to specific groups of vessels. This includes a "Cod recovery Plan" for the protection of cod in the West of Scotland and the North Sea.

In March 2008, a Scottish fishermen's association lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman about the allocation of fishing days for 2007. The association alleged that the Commission had erroneously interchanged data in two columns of a document that served as a basis for the Council Regulation. In the case of the West of Scotland, this mistake led to a reduction of fishing days allocated for the relevant category of vessels from 280 to 252. According to the association, the reduction in the number of fishing days should have instead been applied to the North Sea.

In its opinion, the Commission explained that it had checked the figures and adopted the view that no mistake had been made.

During his investigation into the complaint, the Ombudsman found that the Commission had indeed made an administrative mistake in the relevant document concerning the allocation of fishing days. According to the Ombudsman, the data in the columns for the West of Scotland and the North Sea had been erroneously interchanged, as the complainants had alleged. Since the mistake went unnoticed, it was included in the final Council Regulation on the allocation of fishing days for 2007.

The Ombudsman has urged the Commission to correct its error, pointing out that the mistake might have knock-on effects for subsequent years. The Commission should give a detailed opinion on the matter by 30 April 2009.

To read the full case, please go to:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/cases/draftrecommendation.faces/en/3778/html.bookmark>

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions and bodies. Any EU citizen, resident, or an enterprise or association in a Member State, can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman offers a fast, flexible and free means of solving problems with the EU administration. For more information: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>

For press inquiries: Ms Gundi Gadesmann, Media and External Relations Officer, tel: +32 2 2842609