Sir

Virginijus Sinkevicius
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and
Fisheries (CA.27) of EU-KOM
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1040 Brussel
BELGIUM

to the attention of: Mr. Werner Schwarz, Minister for Agriculture, Rural Areas, Europe and
Consumer Protection, Fleethörn 29-31, D-24103 Kiel, Germany

Büsum, 30th march 2023

COM/2023/102 EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustain-
able and resilient fisheries

Dear Mr Sinkevicius,

I refer to the publication of 21 February 2023, in which the European Commission calls on the
Member States, by the end of March 2024, to adopt national measures or, where appropriate,
propose joint recommendations to the regional groups to prohibit mobile bottom fishing in the
MPAs that are Natura 2000 sites designated under the Habitats Directive protecting the seabed
and marine species. At the end of the letter you will find an invitation to a personal interview
in Büsum (Germany).

The announcement of the action plan came as a shock to me and my colleagues in the brown
shrimp fishery. The effects of brown shrimp fishing on the marine ecosystem were already
intensively studied since the establishment of the National Park in 1990. The result is always
the same: brown shrimp fishing in the national park is ecosystem-compatible according to
ecosystem research.

The most recent example of this is the CRANIMPACT project of the Thünen Institute for Sea
Fisheries in Bremerhaven, which was commissioned by the states of Lower Saxony and Schles-
wig-Holstein and whose results will be presented shortly. In this study, areas fished by brown
shrimp fishery are compared with areas free of any fishery in a scientifically sound manner.
Again, we expect confirmation of only very minor impacts from the brown shrimp fishery.

The scientific bases cited for the compatibility of brown shrimp fishing with the national park
lead me to only one conclusion: the action plan demands a blanket ban from the member
states that lacks any proportionality and for which there is no scientifically sound basis.
For us, this would mean the complete loss of the main fishing area off our coast and would drive the brown shrimp fisheries of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands to ruin. That is why we took to the streets with our colleagues in Büsum last week and welcomed more than 100 cutters to join shoulder to shoulder.

Your concern is the protection of marine ecosystems. It is the same for us. We are proud of the MSC certification we achieved in 2017, in which we committed ourselves to technical improvements in fishing gear, monitoring of bycatch and our own management system. The now demanded blanket ban on beam trawl fishing in Natura 2000 areas would make a nonsense of all these efforts.

It is clear to my professional colleagues and me that you are making proposals on a higher level, which have to be adapted to the specific region on the ground. But your approach has caused great annoyance and disappointment here in the region. In this situation, communication is very important in order to develop mutual understanding and to keep the dialogue going.

It has come to our knowledge that you are planning to attend an event in Hamburg on April 25 and 26 on the "Horizon Mission Restore our Ocean and Water". **I would like to cordially invite you to combine your appointment in Hamburg with a visit to us at the heart of Schleswig-Holstein's brown shrimp fishery in Büsum.**

We are currently working on a CO2-free brown shrimp cutter of the future and would like to introduce you to this project.

Sincerely