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• A pledge by **EU Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki** [during her confirmation hearing \[video\]](#) before the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee that 'there would be no community regulation of recreational sea angling' has been branded worthless after she promised 'no fishery, not even leisure fishing, will be unregulated' in a newspaper interview just weeks later.

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Statements regarding the monitoring of leisure fishing were equally misleading. She told MEPs that the effect on stocks was already factored in by experts, while she told Fishing News that this process was 'just starting'.

UKIP MEP Nigel Farage, a member of the Fisheries Committee, said that she "appeared to be prepared to say whatever she thought the audience immediately in front of her wanted to hear."

"To MEPs, she said there would be no regulation, and the effect of leisure fishing was already accounted for. To commercial fishermen via Fishing News, she said that there would be regulation of leisure fishing, and the effect was not yet accounted for.

"Which of these two contradictory statements is true? She has reduced the debate to a farce and demonstrated that she simply can't be trusted.

"More worrying is the idea that the collection of data, which she told MEPs she already had, was in fact just beginning. Charter boat skippers and even individual anglers will face mountains of paperwork to account for days at sea and catches landed.

"Clearly this is the thin end of the wedge, and where draconian reporting requirements are put in place, equally draconian regulation will be sure to follow. For sea anglers, this can only cause serious problems."

[At her hearing on January 19](#), in response to a question from Nigel Farage, Ms Damanaki said:

"On recreational sea-angling, I'd like to reassure you that I'm not planning to include recreational sea-angling in my policy in a way which will cover other countries. I believe that there are enough rules and regulations in each member state. It is up to each country to regulate the matter as it sees fit. I want to be very clear here and I'm going to be frank, but the results of recreational sea angling are also factored in when our scientists assess the levels of our stocks. They have to factor this in to give us the best possible picture of the situation of the stocks in your country and other countries, but there will be no community regulation on recreational sea angling."

In Fishing News (12 February 2010), Ms Damanaki was asked: "There have been allegations from some quarters that there has been over-regulation of the commercial sector while the leisure sector continues to catch fish without any controls. Are there plans to investigate these claims?"

Her reply completely contradicts what she had claimed at the hearing:

"I can assure you that the commission plans to get to grips with this matter. No fishery, not even leisure fishing, will be unregulated. Our marine researchers have already started to chart the scope and damaging effects of leisure fishing on the stocks."