

Catches in the NE Atlantic

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NE Atlantic is the EU's most important fishing area.

In 1999 4.6 million tonnes of the EU's total catch of fishery products was obtained from the Northeast Atlantic (table 1). This was 74% of the total of 6.2 million tonnes from all areas and about nine times that from the next most important area, the Mediterranean with 550 thousand tonnes.

The other two fishing nations of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, had almost the same combined catch (4.4 million tonnes) and they were almost completely dependant on this area.

By comparison the catches by the Candidate Countries in the Northeast Atlantic were relatively minor, only 320 thousand tonnes. These countries were relatively less dependant on this area since it contributed only 29% to the total of 1.1 million tonnes. This may be explained by 9 of these 13 countries not being coastal states of the NE Atlantic.

Country	NE Atlantic	All areas	% NE Atl.
EU-15	4 647 469	6 278 538	74
A	-	432	-
B	29 340	29 876	98
D	188 806	238 922	79
DK	1 404 470	1 404 917	100
E	436 360	1 179 734	37
F	451 314	650 269	69
FIN	107 707	144 520	75
IRL	282 757	285 957	99
NL	388 375	514 615	75
P	176 933	209 311	85
S	349 867	351 345	100
UK	831 539	837 768	99
ISL	1 744 876	1 754 393	99
N	2 615 220	2 620 073	100
EEA	9 007 565	10 653 004	85
EE	90 315	111 793	81
LT	20 967	33 594	62
LV	78 147	125 389	62
PL	131 057	235 112	56
Other CC	-	614 909	-
CC	320 486	1 120 797	29

Table 1: Catches in 1999 (tonnes)

Iceland and Norway are the major players in the area.

Iceland and Norway combined caught 4.4 million tonnes in the NE Atlantic in 1999, 51% of the 9.0 million EEA total. Denmark (1.4 million tonnes) was the major EU country in the area, followed by the United Kingdom (832 thousand tonnes).

Spain and France of the marine NE Atlantic fishing nations are the least dependant on the area (only 36% and 69% of their catches came from the area in 1999) but they are also coastal nations of another area, the Mediterranean, and they have distant water fisheries in other areas.

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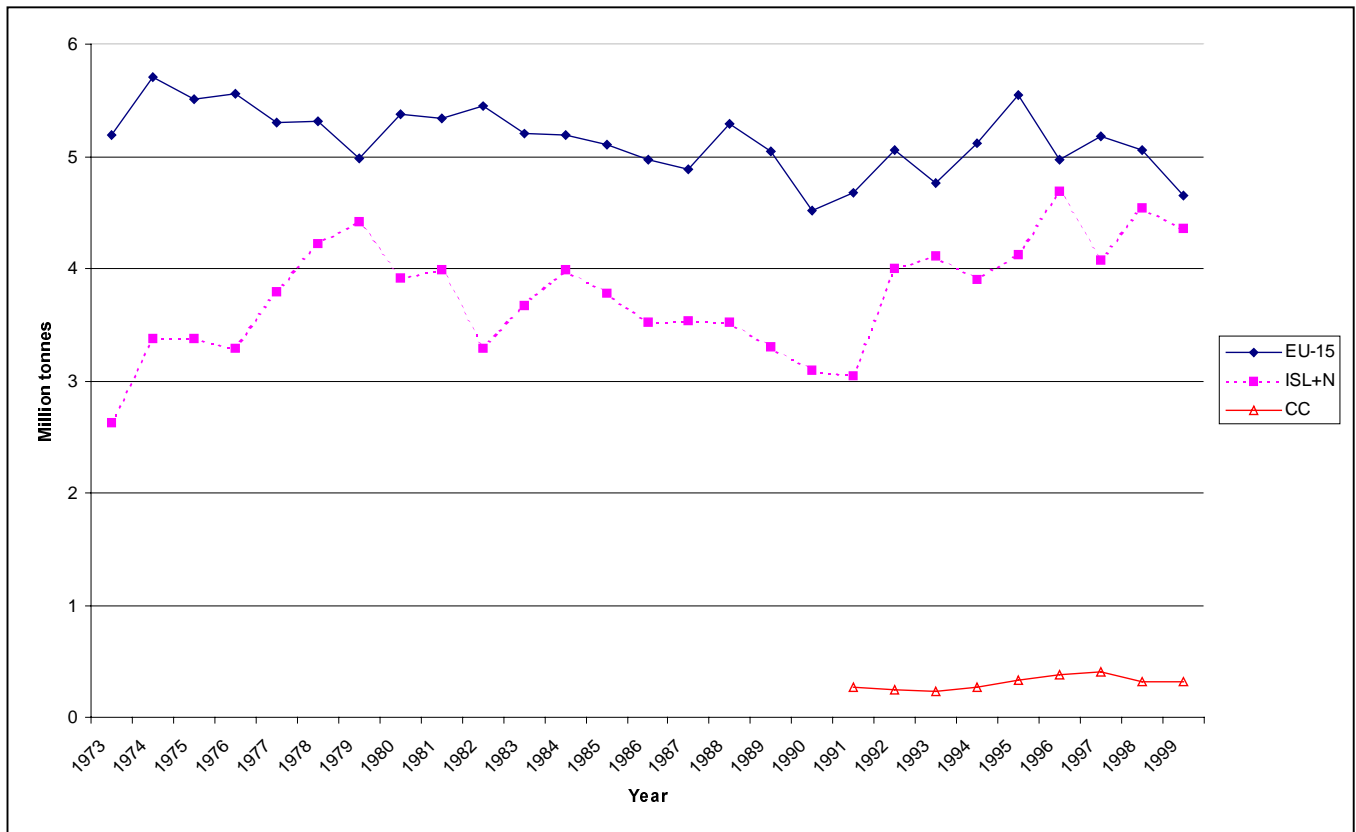


Figure 1: Catches in the NE Atlantic in the period 1973-1999

EU's catches have decreased over time.

In the period since 1973 (the first year for which comprehensive data are available) there has been a general downward trend in the EU catches in the area from around 5.5 million tonnes in the 1970's to 4.6 million tonnes in 1999 (figure 1). The variation from year to year is much more pronounced since 1987.

By contrast the catches by Iceland and Norway have shown a general up-ward trend from 3.5 million tonnes in the mid-1970s to 4.4 million tonnes currently. However, again, the year-on-year variation is greater for the later part of this period.

The time series of data for the Candidate Countries only starts in 1991 and there is little discernable trend in the catches.

North Sea is the most important zone for the EU within the NE Atlantic

[Note: for the purposes of this report the NE Atlantic has been divided into 9 statistical zones (see Figure 4). Only data for the period 1974-98 are available using this statistical breakdown.]

Historically the North Sea (zone B) has been the most important fishing zone within the NE Atlantic for EU countries (figure 2 and table 2). In 1998 it accounted for 1.8 million tonnes (35%) of the 5.1 million tonnes caught in the NE Atlantic. However the trend since 1974 (when the catch was 2.4 million tonnes or 42% of the total) is of steadily declining catches until 1987 after which the decline continues but with larger year-on-year variations.

The next most important zone is the South and West of the British Isles (zone D) with a catch of 1.5 million tonnes, 30% of the total, in 1998. The trend of catches in this zone since 1974 has been for a relatively steady increase. The Baltic Sea (Zone C) and the Western Waters (zone E) have also shown a trend of steadily increasing catches in the period since 1974.

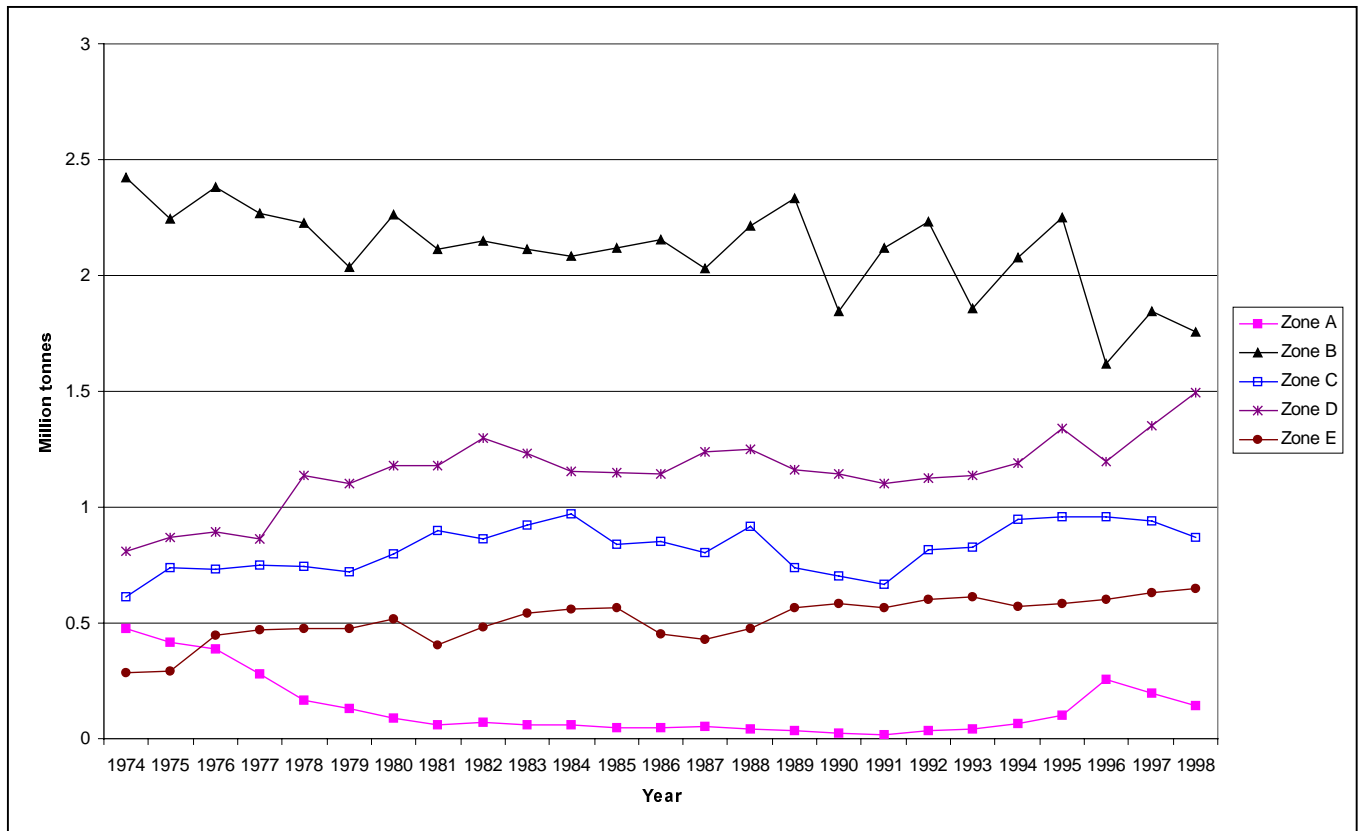


Figure 2: Catches by the EU in zones of the NE Atlantic in 1974-98.

Zone	1974	1998
A: Northern waters	474 061	143 073
B: North Sea	2 427 746	1 758 098
C: Baltic Sea	695 148	869 095
D: S & W of British Isles	884 666	1 493 442
E: Southern waters	815 864	650 767
F: Western waters	14 426	50 264
G: Icelandic waters	81 406	19 537
H: Faroese waters	218 792	320
I: Greenland waters	32 579	70 433
Unknown	113 428	874
Total	5 758 116	5 055 903

Table 2: EU catches in zones of the NE Atlantic in 1974 and 1998 (tonnes)

Northern waters are crucial for Norwegian fisheries

Not surprising given their geographical positions, the northern waters of the NE Atlantic are of major importance to Iceland and Norway. In 1998 1.7 million tonnes of the combined Icelandic and Norwegian catch was taken in the Northern Waters (zone A) (see figure 3 and table 3). This was 37% of the total catch of these two countries in the NE Atlantic and 88% was taken by Norwegian vessels. Iceland's catches were largely made in Icelandic Waters (zone G) - 1.4 million tonnes in 1998.

Since 1974 there have been very large changes in the year-on-year catches in the different zones. The most outstanding was the fall in catches by Norway and Iceland in the Northern Waters (zone A) from 2.2 million tonnes in 1983 to 570 thousand tonnes in 1990. This was largely due to the collapse of the fishery for capelin (*Mallotus villosus*) from a catch of 1.5 million tonnes in 1983 to 5 thousand tonnes in 1990. The total catch in this zone has subsequently recovered but has yet to reach the level of 1983. The catches in Icelandic Waters (zone G) although demonstrating an upward trend have been subject to great annual variations.

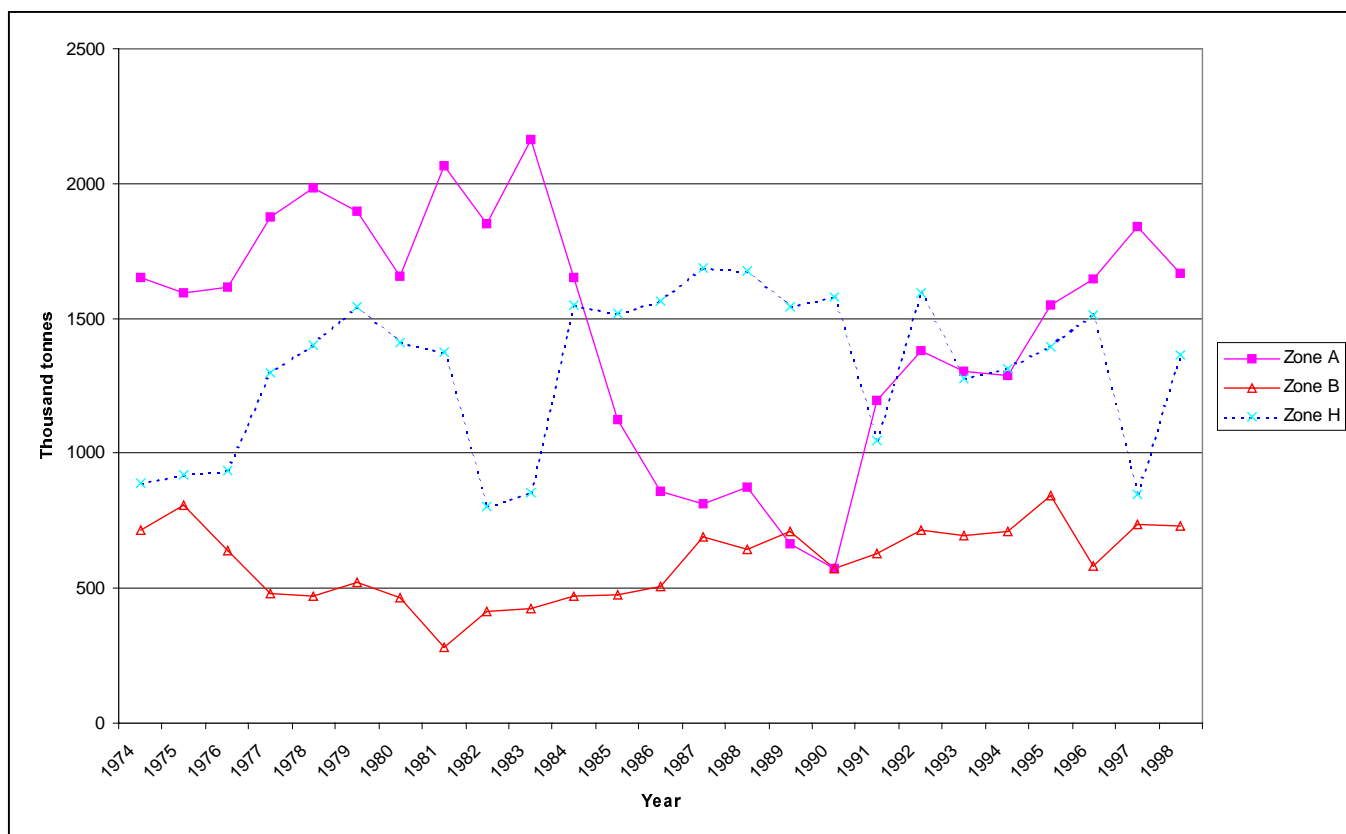


Figure 3: Catches (thousand tonnes) by Iceland and Norway combined in zones of the NE Atlantic, 1974-1999

Area	1974	1998
Zone A	1 653	1 665
Zone B	715	734
Zone C	15	24
Zone D	74	494
Zone E	-	-
Zone F	-	2
Zone G	17	40
Zone H	889	1 366
Zone I	13	215
Unknown	1	-
Total	3 377	4 540

Table 3: Catches (thousand tonnes) by Iceland and Norway combined in zones of the NE Atlantic, 1974 and 1998

The main fishing grounds of the Candidate Countries are in the Baltic

Given that the Candidate Countries fishing in the NE Atlantic are all Baltic Sea coastal states it is not surprising that that zone is of major importance. Indeed, 284 thousand tonnes (89%) of the total 318 thousand tonnes caught in the NE Atlantic were from the Baltic Sea in 1998 (table 4).

Area	1998
Zone A	9 701
Zone B	868
Zone C	283 936
Zone D	-
Zone E	-
Zone F	10 737
Zone G	7 689
Zone H	-
Zone I	-
Unknown	4 866
Total	317 797

Table 4: Catch (tonnes) by Candidate Countries in zones of the NE Atlantic in 1998

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Zone E	Zone F	Zone G	Zone H	Zone I	Unknown	Total
HER - Atlantic herring	90 463	153 365	348 601	144 847	64	-	45	-	-	-	737 386
SAN - Sandeels	-	668 573	10 667	5 349	243	-	-	-	-	-	684 832
SPR - European sprat	-	140 871	308 602	10 853	-	-	-	-	-	-	460 326
MAC - Atlantic mackerel	7	51 844	4 211	285 617	34 610	-	2 289	-	-	-	378 578
HOM - Atlantic horse mackerel	-	16 347	3 501	270 058	39 661	-	-	-	-	-	329 565
WHB - Blue whiting	1 290	51 754	13 864	193 294	32 426	-	13 289	-	-	-	305 918
COD - Atlantic cod	39 893	108 374	80 033	31 010	302	-	292	9	308	-	260 221

Table 5: Major species caught by EU countries in the NE Atlantic in 1998 (tonnes)

Pelagic fish are the most important.

The six most important fish species in EU member countries' catches in the NE Atlantic in 1998 were all from pelagic fisheries. The Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*) was the most important with a catch of 737 386 tonnes, with 47% (348 601 tonnes) coming from the Baltic Sea (zone C) (Table 4). The North Sea (zone B), the South and West of the British Isles (zone D) and the Northern seas (zone A) also made significant contributions. Sandeels (*Ammodytes*) were the next important species with a catch of 684 832 tonnes, with the fishery in the North Sea (zone B) accounting for most of the catch (668 573 tonnes or 98% of the total). The European sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*), the third most important species, was principally caught in the Baltic Sea (zone C) but the three following species, the Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*), the Atlantic horse mackerel (*Trachurus trachurus*) and the blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*) were all largely caught in fisheries to the South and West of the British Isles (zone D). The Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) was the only demersal species in the top seven and the catch of 260 221 tonnes was taken predominantly from the North Sea (zone B) and the Baltic Sea (zone C).

Pelagic fish are also dominant in the catches of Iceland and Norway (table 5). The Atlantic herring is again the most important species with a catch in 1998 of 1.1 million tonnes, 83% from Northern waters (zone A). The capelin (*Mallotus villosus*) was the next most important species with 76% of the total catch (838 291 tonnes) being taken from Icelandic waters (zone H). 76% of the 639 179 tonnes of blue whiting was taken from the south and west of the United Kingdom (zone D). The 343 625 tonnes of sandeels was taken almost exclusively from the North Sea (zone B). Significant demersal fisheries for the Atlantic cod and the saithe (*Pollachius virens*) are undertaken by Iceland and Norway, largely in Northern waters (zone A), the North Sea (zone B) and Icelandic waters (zone H).

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Zone E	Zone F	Zone G	Zone H	Zone I	Unknown	Total
HER - Atlantic herring	918 352	97 719	10 591	5 317	-	-	-	77 326	-	-	1 109 305
CAP - Capelin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	633 822	204 469	-	838 291
WHB - Blue whiting	12 077	39 974	-	482 835	-	-	35 780	68 513	-	210 070	639 179
COD - Atlantic cod	315 095	5 823	1 293	88	-	-	553	241 545	0	-	564 396
SAN - Sandeels	-	343 624	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	343 625
POK - Saithe	144 103	49 859	395	41	-	-	54	30 531	-	-	224 982
MAC - Atlantic mackerel	54 829	102 946	922	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	158 697

Table 6: Major species caught by Iceland and Norway in the NE Atlantic in 1998 (tonnes)

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Zone D	Zone E	Zone F	Zone G	Zone H	Zone I	Unknown	Total
SPR - European sprat	-	-	140 574	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	140 574
HER - Atlantic herring	-	-	91 379	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	91 379
COD - Atlantic cod	1 902	25	37 922	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39 849
MAC - Atlantic mackerel	5 096	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 260	-	2 823	10 179

Table 7: Major species in the catches of Candidate Countries in the NE Atlantic in 1998 (tonnes)

Three species, the European sprat and the Atlantic herring (both from pelagic fisheries) and the Atlantic cod (from demersal fisheries) are dominant in the catches of the Candidate Countries (Table 7). As has been mentioned above, the fisheries of these countries are very much concentrated in the Baltic Sea (zone C).

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The catch statistics have been submitted by the national authorities to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) on Statlant 27A questionnaires. Since 1993 the data have been submitted by EEA countries to Eurostat under the terms of Council Regulation no. 3880/91. Eurostat gratefully acknowledges the contribution made by ICES and FAO in developing the data-base used in compiling this report.

The data are expressed in the live weight equivalent of the landings. They are derived from the landed weight of the fishery products to which conversion factors have been applied. The data exclude all quantities caught but not landed.

The European Economic Area countries (EEA) are the 15 Member States of the European Union (EU-15) plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. The latter has no marine fisheries.

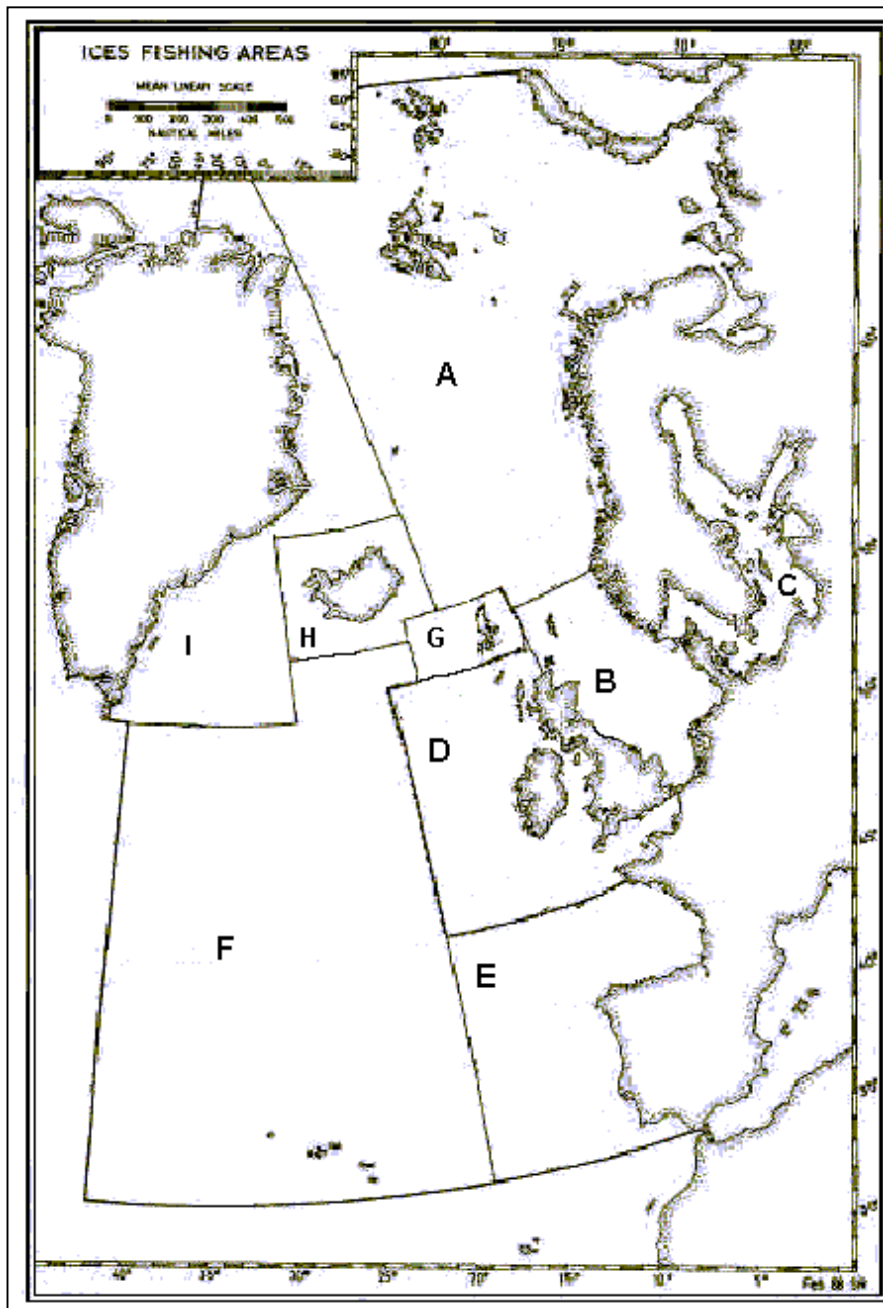
The data for Germany for the whole period covered by this report include the data for the New Länder (the former German Democratic Republic).

The European Union (EU-15) data are for the current 15 Member States of the European Union, even for periods prior to their accession.

The EU Candidate Countries are:

Bulgaria (BG)	Cyprus (CY)	Czech Republic (CZ)
Estonia (EE)	Hungary (HU)	Latvia (LV)
Lithuania (LT)	Malta (MT)	Poland (PL)
Romania (RO)	Slovak Republic (SK)	Slovenia (SI)
Turkey (TR)		

Currently only Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have fisheries in the NE Atlantic.



- A: Northern waters** (ICES areas I + II)
- B: North Sea** (ICES area IV)
- C: Baltic Sea** (ICES area III)
- D: South and West of the United Kingdom** (ICES areas VI + VII)
- E: Southern waters** (ICES areas VIII + IX)
- F: Western waters** (ICES areas X + XII)
- G: Faroeese waters** (ICES area Vb)
- H: Icelandic waters** (ICES area Va)
- I: Greenland waters** (ICES area XIV)

Figure 4: Sub-divisions of the NE Atlantic.

Further information:

➤ Reference publications

Title Fisheries Yearbook 2000
 Catalogue No KS-31-00-885-3A-C Price EUR 23,50

➤ Databases

New Cronos, Domain: FISH

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