

## **Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation**

### **The Atypical Worker Permission Scheme and its implications for the Irish fishing industry**

**14.00 Hrs on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017, Leinster House, Dublin 2**

#### **Presentation by Norah M Parke, Project Coordinator, Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Ltd**

Currently Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation members do not employ any non-EEA personnel so we can take a dispassionate view of the situation particularly with regard to this on-going process with the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

However, the KFO has been closely involved with a wide range of issues concerning the welfare of fishermen over the years. We have engaged freely and proactively with the agencies concerned and made every effort to disseminate relevant information, clarify some of the more obscure ramifications and consequences of regulations and, in fact, lobbied for improved protection of fishermen – Irish, European Union and non-EEA alike. In addition, the KFO CEO, Sean O'Donoghue, was a member of the Inter-Departmental Task Force set up by the then Minister for the Marine, Simon Coveney, TD., in November 2015 to regularise the employment of non-EEA fishermen

KFO has been a supportive member of the Santa Marta Group – North Atlantic Maritime Project since its launch in Ireland in May 2016. I suggest the reports and views expressed at the most recent Santa Marta Group meeting in Dublin (20<sup>th</sup> June 2017) which appear to over-lap considerably with this Joint Committee group should be given some consideration. My own experiences dealing with Irish fishermen attempting to legally employ non-EEA workers may shed some light on the reasons why there are occasions when it is simply impossible to be compliant leading to both employers and workers "falling through the cracks".

I can say categorically there is no vessel owner, Skipper or other member of the KFO organisation who has any desire to exploit their workers let alone treat them as slave labour and I am sure I speak for my industry colleagues in this regard also. However, we need to live in the real world and acknowledge that sometimes things go wrong; if a law does not work or is a "bad" law we need to change it but a successful change needs dealing with the facts and not emotional, exaggerated, and indeed sometimes slanderous, allegations.

Let us take this opportunity to identify the drivers of non-compliance – not alone regarding non-EEA nationals but employed fishermen from our own communities and within the EU. This is not a situation which will be rectified by more enforcement of short-term solutions but by appropriate regulation.