

**Priority question for written answer P-004240/2026
to the Commission**

Rule 144

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Subject: Exclusion of ‘piedra-bola’ longline fishing from the fishing ban in 87 areas

Regulation 2016/2336¹ prohibits fishing ‘with bottom gears’ in designated areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems occur or are likely to occur, severely affecting longline fishing fleets. On 9 September, the comprehensive ISPAMER report² was presented to the European Parliament. The report concluded that ‘piedra-bola’ is a type of semi-pelagic longline fishing and its impact on the seabed is negligible. On 22 September, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) published an opinion³ which distinguished between bottom longlines and semi-pelagic longlines, and classified ‘piedra-bola’ longlines as semi-pelagic. On 14 October, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food declared that it had secured ‘separate recognition of ‘piedra-bola’ longline fishing within the European fisheries data system’⁴.

Given that the Commission is always guided by the best scientific advice available, I understand that it will want to reflect this distinction in European legislation, creating a separate category for semi-pelagic equipment.

In view of the above:

1. What does the Commission consider to be the fastest way to exclude ‘piedra-bola’ longline fishing from the ban laid down in Regulation 2016/2336 and Implementing Regulation 2022/1614⁵?
2. Would it consider adjusting the definition of ‘bottom gears’ in Article 2(d) of Regulation 734/2008⁶ to include this distinction recommended by the ICES?
3. When will it implement these changes?

Submitted: 16.10.2026

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32016R2336>.

² Valeiras, J., Barreiro, M., Fernández, J.C. and Abad, E. ‘The reduced impact of semi-pelagic hake longline fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems in European Atlantic waters: technical report of the ISPAMER project, 2023-2025’, Instituto Español de Oceanografía, 2026.

³ https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/EU_request_on_methods_to_calculate_pressure_metrics_for_static_fishing_gears/32820941?file=69215308.

⁴ <https://www.mapa.gob.es/dam/mapa/contenido/prensa/notas-de-prensa/documentos/documentos-2026/26-10-14-palangre-piedra-bola.pdf>.

⁵ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2022/1614/oj.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2008/734/oj>.