

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002306/24
to the Commission
Emma Fourreau (The Left)
(29 October 2024)**

Subject: Illegal whaling in Iceland

There has been an international moratorium on commercial whaling for over 40 years, and the EU stands firmly in opposition to commercial whaling. The EU must meet its legally binding climate targets, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea mandates doing everything possible to mitigate the impact of climate change on the sea. And yet in 2023 the Commission promised Iceland carbon credits in the form of exemptions from aviation emission allowances.

Great whales, such as the fin whale that Iceland allows to be killed, sequester tonnes of carbon in their lifetimes, and are part of the carbon cycle of the ocean, helping phytoplankton to grow. The ocean is the largest carbon sink on the planet. So our questions are simple:

1. In the Commission's opinion, why is Iceland continuing to allow the killing of great whales when we are battling a climate crisis and great whales are critical to carbon sequestration in the ocean?
2. Why is the Commission helping Iceland skirt its climate responsibilities while Iceland is engaged in commercial whaling?

Submitted: 29.10.2024

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(8 January 2025)**

Firstly, the EU is firmly opposed to commercial whaling, as reflected in its adherence to the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) moratorium and its strict regulations under the Habitats Directive ⁽¹⁾ and Wildlife Trade Regulation ⁽²⁾.

Iceland's decision to allow the hunting of whales falls outside the EU's jurisdiction. Regardless, the EU continues to advocate for an end to commercial whaling through diplomatic engagement and cooperation with Iceland.

While no commercial whaling appears to have occurred, the Commission regrets Iceland's decision to issue a license to kill 128 fin whales for the 2024 hunting season, especially given their critical role in carbon sequestration and maintaining marine ecosystem health.

Encouragingly, in February 2024, an independent review of Iceland's whaling framework was initiated, and a working group was appointed to assess compliance with international obligations and present policy options. The Commission looks forward to its final report and will closely monitor developments within Iceland.

Secondly, the EU is committed to achieving its legally binding climate targets. The climate-related commitments taken by Iceland in the framework of cooperation with the EU are limited to the anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and removals by sinks as defined under the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and thus do not include ocean-based carbon sinks and pools.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7-50.

⁽²⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 of 9 December 1996 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein, OJ L 61, 3.3.1997, p. 1-69.