

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000582/25
to the Commission
Mathilde Androuët (Pfe)
(7 February 2025)

Subject: Possible circumvention of Directive 92/43/EEC and state of scientific research on the harmful effects of offshore wind farms, of which the Commission is aware

The French small-scale fishing union believes that some prefectures in France are circumventing Council Directive 92/43/EEC ⁽¹⁾ on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora to make it possible for wind farms to be built ⁽²⁾. There has also been condemnation — in particular in Belgium ⁽³⁾, Portugal ⁽⁴⁾ and Spain ⁽⁵⁾ in recent months — of the reduction of fishing grounds, which poses an existential threat to the small-scale fishing industry, and the huge damage that offshore wind farms cause to marine animals and plants.

As long ago as 2021, a Commission report identified adverse effects of offshore wind farms deemed ‘temporary’ during the construction phase, and ‘variable’ effects during the operational phase ⁽⁶⁾. More critically, in a report published in 2023, the European Court of Auditors expressed concern over the lack of clarity surrounding ‘numerous environmental aspects linked to planned offshore renewable energy deployment’ and about the fact that ‘the environmental footprint on marine life may be significant and has not been taken sufficiently into account’ ⁽⁷⁾.

1. Is the Commission aware of breaches of Directive 92/43/EEC?
2. Has it obtained and requested more detailed scientific reports confirming the environmental damage caused by offshore wind farms? If so, which reports?

Submitted: 7.2.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(7 May 2025)

The Commission has received several complaints regarding the allegedly wrong application of EU environmental law regarding offshore wind farms, including those being developed in France.

Upon examination and for the moment, the Commission has not identified any problem that would justify further investigation. The Commission also notes that complainants in France have sometimes referred such matters to administrative courts to challenge development permits, including environmental authorisations.

For the reasons outlined above, the Commission has not requested any information from the French authorities about possible environmental damage to wild flora and fauna caused by offshore wind farms in French marine waters.

The EU is supporting research to further understand and mitigate the environmental impacts of offshore wind farms, notably through its recent Horizon Europe call for proposals for ‘Minimisation of environmental, and optimisation of socioeconomic impacts in the deployment, operation and decommissioning of offshore wind farms’ ⁽¹⁾.

It is expected that the findings of this research will further enhance knowledge on the impacts of offshore wind farms on biodiversity and help minimise those, among other environmental impacts.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A31992L0043>

² 30 janvier 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1aXhuArgfao&t=2s>

³ <https://www.rtf.be/article/les-pecheurs-europeens-s-inquietent-des-parcs-eoliens-offshore-10601415?>

⁴ <https://vivreleportugal.com/actualite/les-pecheurs-menacent-d-arreter-la-peche-et-dintenter-une-action-en-justice-contre-le-blocus-massif-de-parcs-eoliens-offshore/>

⁵ <https://cadenaser.com/baleares/2025/01/27/el-gob-considera-que-el-parc-eolic-a-menorca-causaria-danys-severs-al-fons-mari-i-afectaria-lecosistema-radio-menorca/>

⁶ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3f2134f9-b84f-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1>

⁷ <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=SR-2023-22>

⁽¹⁾ <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/restore-our-ocean-and-waters/minimisation-environmental-and-optimisation-socioeconomic-impacts-deployment-operation-and>