

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001786/24
to the Commission
Ton Diepeveen (P/E)
(23 September 2024)**

Subject: Lifting the ban on electric pulse fishing in the light of new scientific findings

The European Parliament decided in 2019 to ban electric pulse fishing. A number of scientific studies published since then show that that fishing technique is more sustainable than traditional methods such as beam trawling. For instance, electric pulse fishing reduces impact on seabed life, considerably lowers fishing vessels' fuel consumption and results in less bycatch.

Studies by Wageningen Marine Research in 2020 and the ICES Working Group on Electrical Trawling (WGELECTRA) in 2024.

ICES Scientific Reports. 2024. Working Group on Electrical Trawling (WGELECTRA; outputs from 2023 meeting). Volume 6 | Issue 67 (p. Vii-viii) show that electric pulse fishing causes considerably less environmental harm than traditional fishing methods.

Wageningen University & Research. 2020. The Implications of a Transition from Trawl to Pulse Trawling (p. 10-11).

In this connection:

1. Is the Commission aware of the content of the scientific studies cited in the introduction? If not, why not?
2. Does the Commission agree with the main conclusions of both reports, including the fact that electric pulse fishing reduces impact on seabed life, lowers fuel consumption and results in less by-catch? If not, why not?
3. Why has the Commission not yet lifted the ban on electric pulse fishing?

Submitted: 23.9.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(24 October 2024)**

The Commission welcomes and follows closely scientific publications that may have an impact on fisheries, and therefore, is aware of the publications mentioned.

Some of the conclusions, such as those on the potential of some fishing techniques to reduce the impact on the seabed were already shared by the Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries in 2020 ⁽¹⁾, and echoed by the first report on the implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 ⁽²⁾.

While not included in the initial Commission proposal for that regulation, the final decision of the co-legislators in 2019 was to ban electric pulse fishing and allow it to continue only for scientific purposes under strict conditions set out in the above-mentioned Regulation.

The second report on the implementation of the regulation was adopted in July 2024 ⁽³⁾. This report includes updates on the scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea on innovative gear ⁽⁴⁾ and underlines the need to invest in research and innovation. It presents as well the efforts made by both Member States and stakeholders in this field.

The Commission will continue to engage with the scientists, fisheries managers and stakeholders to encourage the development and use of innovative fishing techniques within the context of continuing to optimise fishing patterns, reduce impact on sensitive habitats and with a view of transitioning to less energy use.

The Commission will closely follow the outcomes of these discussions, as well as the scientific advice on the field, and regularly assess whether amendments to the existing legal framework are justified.

⁽¹⁾ Review of technical measures, Part I, STECF 20-02. EUR 28359 EN.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005, OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105-201 — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0583>

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2024:349:FIN>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.ices.dk/news-and-events/news-archive/news/Pages/InnovativeGear.aspx>