



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Fisheries Policy Mediterranean and Black Sea
The Director

Brussels
MARE.D.3/FB

Dear petitioner,

Thank you for the interest you have expressed in protecting the ocean by calling for a ban on bottom trawling in all Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). We take your concerns very seriously.

The European Commission, as part of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, announced the adoption of a new action plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems. This action plan, expected to be adopted during the first months of next year, will look into possible measures to limit, where necessary, the use of fishing gear most harmful to biodiversity, including on the seabed. It should indeed be noted that bottom-contacting fishing gear is not the only fishing gear of concern.

For what concerns bottom trawlers more specifically, bottom-contacting gear has, in some areas, a major impact on seabed ecosystems. For instance, science demonstrates that 90% of seabed disturbance and damage in the North Sea comes from bottom-contacting gear. This is why the Biodiversity Strategy announced an analysis on how to reconcile the use of bottom-contacting fishing gear with biodiversity goals, in a fair and just way for all.

It is indeed important to also keep in mind that bottom trawlers form an important part of the European industry, by providing direct employment on-board (24 200 jobs full time equivalents (or 25% of EU fleet employment) as well as ancillary employment in fishing communities (total employment amounts to 36 000 jobs).

Along the principles of the Common Fisheries Policy, the first step before the adoption of any measure is therefore the collection of scientific evidence, in order to identify any possible measures striking a balance between immediate socio-economic challenges and urgent protection of the marine environment.

This is already an on-going process in the context of regionalisation. Member States can submit joint recommendations to implement conservation measures in marine areas with a view to complying with EU environmental legislation. There are several files underway in this regard.

We will further look into this question as part of the preparations for the Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems. Please note that a targeted stakeholder consultation will be launched in October in this regard.

In parallel, the new European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund will also continue supporting the transition to more selective and less damaging fishing techniques.

Yours faithfully,

Lena ANDERSSON PENCH