



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Fisheries Policy Mediterranean and Black Sea

Brussels
MARE D3/KP/Ares (2020)

Dear Petitioner,

Commissioner Sinkevičius has followed the issue of bycatch of dolphins very closely and has issued a statement on 25th February¹. It is a matter of serious concern to the European Commission because these animals are strictly protected by the EU Habitats Directive.

According to statistics collected in France, unusually high numbers of short-beaked common dolphins have been found stranded on the shores of the Bay of Biscay in the winters of 2018/19 and 2019/2020. Most of these are marked by fishing gear and are presumed to have been killed in fishing gear. Unfortunately, the exact magnitude of this problem is not fully known. It is therefore important to improve the monitoring of bycatch of sensitive species such as dolphins and to take appropriate preventive measures to avoid bycatch as required by EU environmental and fisheries legislation.

The European Commission has taken contact with the relevant Member States, and has asked them to work urgently on measures to address the problem. We have also made a special request to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea for scientific advice on measures to reduce or eliminate these accidental catches. That advice is expected to be delivered on 25th May and should be the basis for the relevant Member States to find a solution, which can be put in place under the EU law². Failing this, the European Commission will consider whether it is appropriate to implement Commission measures¹ to protect the dolphin population.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_20_328

² According to Article 15(2) of Regulation (EU) No 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 (...), OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105-201

The Commission is determined to find solutions to prevent bycatch of dolphins and other protected species prior to the next winter fishing season in the Bay of Biscay. He thanks you for your interest in the conservation and protection of the marine environment.

Yours sincerely,

Veronika VEITS
Acting Director

ⁱ According to Article 12 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy (...) OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p.22

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