

**Question for written answer E-000477/2023
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (Renew)

Subject: Close seasons to limit cetacean by-catch in the Bay of Biscay

A number of media sources have reported that, in response to a study commissioned by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the Commission is planning two close seasons in 2024 to reduce the by-catch and stranding of cetaceans. The restrictions will be in place from January to March and from mid-July to mid-August. During these periods, the Basque fleet's tuna fishing season is in full swing. Tuna fishing is one of its most sustainable and profitable activities. According to the ICES, the pingers used by boats to prevent by-catch do not work, and so it is in favour of imposing close seasons until an effective solution is found to keep cetaceans away from fishing boats.

1. Is the Commission considering imposing close seasons during the aforementioned periods?
2. If so, will the fishing sector receive any compensation for the losses incurred on account of the close seasons?
3. Is the Commission supporting research into new tools to prevent by-catch?

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