

EU Ombudsman urged to probe Commission support of pulse fishing

Written by Martin Banks on 7 November 2018 in News
News

Campaigners have stepped up their efforts to enforce the ban on pulse fishing approved earlier this year by MEPs.



EU ombudsman Emily O'Reilly has been urged to investigate the European Commission's alleged support of "illegal" pulse fishing.

Pulse fishing is a technique where trawlers use nets that generate an electric current. It has been used to drive fish up out of the seabed and into the net.

Opponents say the method is equivalent to putting a Taser in the water.

RELATED CONTENT

- [EU Parliament votes to ban pulse fishing](#) [1]
 - [Gabriel Mato: CFP reform: Simplifying technical measures important - but fisheries activities must be safeguarded](#) [2]
 - [Renata Briano: EU must ensure future of artisanal fisheries](#) [3]
 - [Alain Cadec: Without common fisheries policy, there would be no more fishermen in EU](#) [4]
-

In January, an amendment calling for a total ban on the use of electric currents for fishing was passed by MEPs by 402 votes to 232.

Pulse fishing is technically illegal in the EU, but there is an exception which allows EU countries to catch up to 5 percent of their annual fishing quota in the North Sea using "innovative methods" in the name of research. Pulse fishing counts as one of those innovative methods.

However, speaking at a press conference in the European Parliament on Tuesday, campaigners stepped up their efforts to enforce the ban on pulse fishing approved earlier this year by MEPs.

They also called on the Ombudsman to "swiftly investigate the obvious maladministration of the commission" on the issue.

"The electric fishing case has become as symbolic of maladministration and moral corruption as the glyphosate or endocrine disruptors files"

Claire Nouvian, chair of BLOOM, a marine campaign group, told reporters, "The parliament is not defending the mandate during trilogue negotiations and the council and commission are acting as though nothing had been brought to their attention.

"Just like the Titanic, they have set off on a trajectory and although it's en route to collapse, it will not change its course."

She pointed out that in 1998, electric fishing was prohibited in the EU at the same time as fishing with explosives or poison.

In 2006 fishing with electricity was re-authorised "for all the wrong reasons - out of pressure" by interest groups and a single member state - France.

She added, "By caving in to private interests, the commission has thus created a gigantic mess. This is a perfect example of how wrongdoing can never fix itself. It just keeps adding layer after layer."

She said that by electrocuting marine life, pulse fishing is "a harmful thing to do."

Presenting what she called new evidence, Nouvian added that the authorisation of a prohibited fishing method "had been done against the explicit advice of scientists.

"We've discovered that most exemptions did not respect the legal framework and that 70 licenses out of 84 were illegal. So-called 'scientific fishing' is as much a fraud as 'scientific whaling' which is used as a pretext to conduct commercial activities."

She claimed that "substantial amounts of public money" had been given for the conversion of trawlers to electricity.

“That money could have served to convert a destructive and nearly bankrupt Dutch fleet of beam trawlers to more sustainable fishing methods.”

She said it was such evidence and data that convinced the parliament to vote in favour of a full prohibition on the use of electricity in January.

“Yet, what has happened since? The parliament is not defending the mandate during trilogue negotiations.”

She added, “We filed our first complaint about illegal electric licenses to the commission in October 2017. It’s been over a year and the commission has done nothing to ensure that this case was duly and swiftly investigated, although the illegality of the practice should have dictated a whole new course to the ongoing negotiations.”

“The electric fishing case has become as symbolic of maladministration and moral corruption as the glyphosate or endocrine disruptors files.”

Nouvian went on, “Today, we are calling on the EU Ombudsman to protect citizens’ rights and to swiftly investigate the obvious maladministration of the commission in this file.

“There is urgency to ensure a proper investigation is done, otherwise we run the risk of having to live with an unacceptable political outcome that authorises electric fishing to continue. This means we will lose the best practices in fishing and lose the integrity and functionality of marine ecosystems.”

“And we will sooner rather than later, allow electric fishing to expand to other areas, in the Mediterranean or the Atlantic, where it will ravage coastal communities of fishermen and destroy the marine environment, just like it is doing in the North Sea.”

She told reporters, “The North Sea should serve as a warning to all. If European institutions are not capable and not willing to defend citizens, small-scale and coastal fishermen, laws, and our environment against the forceful charges of industrial lobbies, then the European Union should not be surprised to disintegrate.”

“Beyond the social urgency of coastal fishermen and the ecological urgency to protect the marine environment, shedding full light on this dossier has become a central question of democracy. We count on the ombudsman to protect us and to protect the EU from itself.”

Her comments were endorsed by another speaker at the news conference, UK MEP John Flack who said he was “proud” to have been one of those members who had voted to outlaw pulse fishing in January.”

Flack said, “I am equally concerned about the impact this has on marine life and the marine environment.”

He added, “Despite this, the commission has held behind-closed-doors discussions which has allowed pulse fishing to continue.”

Another speaker, lawyer Tom Appleby, said there was evidence that pulse fishing was currently taking place in Natura 2000 waters, a network of specially protected areas.

“The question is whether the commission should comply with its own environmental laws,” he said.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

Tags

[Environment](#) [5]

[Maritime and Fisheries](#) [6]

Categories

[Environment](#) [7]



Parliament Magazine is a Dods Group plc title

Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)

[MonitoringDods](#)

[ResearchDods](#)

[EventsDods](#)

[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)

[HouseThe](#)

[Parliament](#)

[MagazineHolyrood](#)

[Total PoliticsPublic](#)

[Affairs NewsCivil](#)

[Service](#)

[World](#)

[PublicTechnology](#)

[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[BriefingDigital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[ScotlandMEP](#)
[AwardsThe Skills](#)
[SummitScottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[AwardsPublic Sector](#)
[Procurement](#)
[SummitPublic](#)
[Sector ICT](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[SummitCyber](#)
[Security](#)
[2017Training](#)
[Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and](#)
[Care Innovation](#)
[ExpoCivil Service](#)
[LiveCivil Service](#)
[AwardsChief](#)
[Nursing Officer for](#)
[England's](#)
[SummitWomen into](#)
[LeadershipThe](#)
[Youth Justice](#)
[ConventionSocitm](#)
[Spring](#)
[ConferenceNHSCC](#)
[Annual Members'](#)
[EventDods at Party](#)
[Conference](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-ombudsman-urged-probe-commission-support-pulse-fishing>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-parliament-votes-ban-pulse-fishing>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/cfp-reform-simplifying-technical-measures-important-fisheries-activities-must-be>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/eu-must-ensure-future-artisanal-fisheries>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/committee-guide-without-common-fisheries-policy-there-would-be-no-more-fishermen-eu>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/environment>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/maritime-and-fisheries>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/environment>