



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

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Questions and answers on full driftnet ban

The European Commission wants to prohibit the use of any kind of driftnets for fishing in all EU waters as of 1 January 2015. Although rules are already in place to forbid using driftnets to catch certain migratory fishes, the practice continues to be a cause of concern due to the incidental catching of marine mammals, sea turtles and sea birds which are mostly protected under EU legislation. To fight circumvention, the Commission proposal includes a full ban of driftnets fishing in the EU as well as the prohibition of keeping driftnets on board of fishing vessels. Furthermore, to avoid ambiguity, the proposal refines the current definition of a driftnet.

Which does this ban seek to achieve?

By proposing that fishing with driftnets be prohibited, the European Commission is seeking to address persisting environmental and conservation problems, in particular to marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds.

It will further aim to eliminate shortcoming in the legal framework and close any possible loopholes to strengthen control and enforcement and ensure that the rules on implementation are observed. By doing so it will contribute to the EU's targets for "good environmental status" for Europe's seas as established under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

What will change with this ban?

All small-scale driftnets irrespective of their length and targeted species will be banned, as is already the case for the Baltic Sea.

Currently EU vessels are allowed to keep on board and use small-scale driftnets, except in the Baltic, provided that their individual or total length is equal to or smaller than 2.5 km and that their use is not intended for the capture of listed species.

Who will have to stop fishing following the driftnet ban?

The majority of driftnets fisheries identified are seasonal, and the participating fleets are comprised of polyvalent vessels (i.e. carrying out multiple fisheries by using more than one fishing gears). For some fishers driftnetting represents only a few months of fishing activity in any year with some fishers using driftnets for less than half a month per year.

The total prohibition to use driftnets is not expected to result in a corresponding reduction of vessels and fishers which will continue to operate with other gears as already authorised in their fishing licence whilst it avoids an increased administrative burden if other policy options had been chosen.

Which EU countries will be affected?

Currently, fishing with small-scale driftnets in marine waters and river mouths is actively carried out in Bulgaria, France (both mainland and DOM), Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and UK.

Does the ban include only marine fisheries?

The proposal concerns driftnet fisheries carried out in marine waters as well as in the deltas and estuaries of rivers until the upstream spatial limit where those areas are considered marine waters according to national legislations.

Can the new European Maritime Fisheries Fund be used to support the transition towards a total ban of the small-scale driftnet fisheries?

The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), depending on each Member State's needs and inclination, could be used to support the transition towards a total ban of the small-scale driftnet fisheries. For instance it could be used to substitute currently legal driftnets with other fishing gears in the fishing licence provided that the new fishing gear is more selective and that the substitution is done before the entry into force of the driftnet ban.

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) could also be used, under certain conditions, to support the transition towards a total ban of the small-scale driftnet fisheries provided that eligible expenditures are executed by the beneficiary until 31 December 2015.

For more information

- [IP/14/563](#)
- [Proposal to prohibit driftnet fisheries](#)
- [Driftnet roadmap](#) (April 2013)
- [Public Consultation](#) (September 2013)