

European Parliament passes final pulse ban regulation

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The European Parliament has voted by a significant majority to pass the 'Technical Measures' regulation, which will see electric pulse trawling banned from July 1, 2021.

MEPs voted by a majority of 571 to 60 to ban the controversial fishing method, which involves dragging a current-producing trawl over the seafloor to induce a cramp in bottom-dwelling flatfish, making them easier to catch.

It is a practice that has been widely used by the Dutch fishing fleet, with 79 vessels currently using pulse trawl gear via research derogations.

The EU Parliament had originally voted to ban the practice [on Jan.16, 2018](#), while the European Council would then vote in favor of a full ban [on Feb. 11](#) this year.

The latest vote was the final adoption of the ban as law. Following the final publication of the regulation in a few weeks time, the number of vessels authorized to use pulse gear will be reduced from the current 84 licenses to just a dozen trawlers before the full ban in 2021.

In addition, each coastal state may decide to prohibit pulse trawling in its 12-nautical mile (22.2km) coastal strip. A draft law to this effect has been tabled in France, and called for in Belgium by MEP Tom Vandenkendelaere.

For the French environmental NGO Bloom, the final decision represents a significant victory.

"When we started our campaign by filing a lawsuit against the Netherlands in early October 2017, victory was still far away," said Sabine Rosset, director of Bloom, in a press statement. "The European Commission was proposing to authorize electric fishing in the North Sea, an authorization that would have led to the spreading of this destructive method across all European waters. Our goal was a total and definitive ban."

"I am proud of what our team has demonstrated: an unwavering commitment, unity in the face of adversity, and the sacrifice of many weekends and hours of sleep to win this fight."

At the time of writing, Bloom is awaiting results from the College of European Commissioners, which is yet to open an infringement procedure against the Netherlands concerning the legality of its original pulse trawl exemptions.