



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels  
MARE/C1/APP/ms

**Subject: Reply to CCRUP's Recommendations n°182 (on fishing opportunities for 2026) and n°183 (on incidental catches of common dolphins).**

Dear Mr López,

Thank you for transmitting on behalf of CCSUD Recommendation n° 182 on Fishing Opportunities for 2026 and Recommendation n° 183 on incidental catches of common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay <sup>(1)</sup>. I welcome direct feedback from stakeholders as it helps us to better understand their concerns and priorities.

➤ *On the fishing opportunities for 2026*

For the stocks managed by the EU only, the Council adopted 19 TACs at MSY as proposed by the Commission (out of 24). 9 multiannual TACs were set for two years or more in order to ensure stability and predictability, of which 8 concern CCSUD. These multiannual TACs are those for Norway lobster ICES area 8c (FU31 and FU25), plaice 8-9-10, sole 8cde-9-10, whiting 8 and pollack 8abde, 8c and 9-10.

There are a significant number of increased or stable TACs for 2026. These stocks include Norway lobster in the Bay of Biscay, Southern seabass, common sole in the Bay of Biscay, Southern hake, megrims in the Iberian waters, as well as the small pelagic stocks of anchovy in the Bay of Biscay and anchovy in the Gulf of Cadiz. This is a positive development for economically important fisheries in the region and has largely been made possible by the efforts undertaken in the past, steered by the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation and the Western Waters Multiannual Plan. I would like to congratulate all those involved in this sound management.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) stressed that there are several struggling stocks with low biomass levels in the Bay of Biscay and Iberian waters, such as pollack in both regions, plaice in Iberian waters, common sole in the Iberian coast

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<sup>(1)</sup> Our references Ares(2025) 10445768 and Ares(2025)11182060, respectively for fishing opportunities for 2026 and incidental catches of common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay.

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and Norway lobster in the Gulf of Cadiz. These are important fisheries, and we should rebuild them for our fishers. Therefore, to address these challenges, the Council agreed to implement further reductions to start rebuilding these stocks and improve the profitability of the fishing fleets in the long-term. I am convinced that rebuilding fish stocks is the way forward to safeguarding sustainability, economic stability and food security for future generations. I hope CCSUD will join the Commission in this effort.

➤ *On common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay*

I read with attention your latest opinion on incidental catches of common dolphins and, more precisely, your suggestions to further support the scientific work undertaken by ICES and STECF. I, of course, concur with you, which is why the Commission is closely working with both scientific bodies. The socio-economic assessment of the one-month closure is ongoing and will be reviewed at the next STECF plenary meeting planned from 9 to 13 March. I would like to thank you for CCSUD's feedback, which was shared with the relevant experts. The report will be published on the STECF website by 30 March 2026.

The work within ICES will be at several steps. This year, the ICES WKBYC will review and update population abundance and will investigate whether annual bycatch estimates can be provided by ICES Division and/or quarter. For 2027, ICES will explore the possibility of assessing the efficiency of the one-month closure and/or spatial mapping of the bycatch risk for common dolphins. In 2028 and with the results of the SCANS survey, ICES will attempt to provide updated estimates of population abundance and sustainability thresholds for common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay and Iberian waters. This approach will allow scientists to better distribute the work and account for the most up-to-date information.

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I look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Amanda Perez Perera, our policy officer ([Amanda.PEREZ-PERERA@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Amanda.PEREZ-PERERA@ec.europa.eu)) and Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator (via the functional mailbox [MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu](mailto:MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu)).

Yours sincerely,

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