



Members of the Fisheries Committee  
European Parliament  
Bât. Altiero Spinelli  
60 Rue Wiertz  
B-1047, Brussels

November 9 2017

**Subject: Support for technical rules to safeguard seabirds**

Dear Members of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee,

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe and BirdLife Europe would like to express their concerns over the lack of measures being taken to tackle seabird bycatch across European waters, despite the fact that several species are protected under the EU Birds Directive. Seabirds forage in highly productive areas of the ocean, which are also targeted by commercial fishing vessels. This overlap can cause them to be accidentally caught on hooks, or entangled in nets. For small-scale low impact fishers, such incidental bycatches of seabirds represent a potential danger to life and limb. Freeing entrapped birds and repairing damaged gear can be both time consuming and costly. Furthermore, for some species, such as the Critically Endangered Balearic Shearwater, incidental catches are leading them to extinction. Small-scale fishers are keen to demonstrate that they can be part of the solution to avoiding and otherwise reducing accidental catches of seabirds through cooperating with scientists and conservation organizations.

The European Commission proposal for a regulation on the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures (2016/0074(COD)) could provide the necessary framework for tackling this problem, including through ensuring that appropriate research programmes and management measures are financially supported and that there is a level playing field across the regions.

Ahead of the Fisheries Committee vote on November 21, the Low Impact Fishers of Europe and BirdLife Europe would like to recommend that the following management measures are included as an integral part of the Technical Measures 2016/0074(COD)) regulation and its implementation across the different EU sea basins:

- Establish fully funded partnership research programmes at national level between fishers, conservationists and scientists to evaluate bycatch occurrence in different gears, including identifying the overlap of susceptible seabird species with fishing gears and fishing effort and to trial the most appropriate suite of technical solutions for fishing gears to minimise seabird bycatch.
- Support organizations of small scale fishers to develop appropriate catch monitoring systems, including mobile and other electronic technologies, to enable them to log avifauna by-catch and related temporal and spatial information.
- In consultation with fishers, roll out a combination of scientifically tested and technically proven solutions for longline fisheries with adequate financial support, such as: tori lines, changes to line weights, hook shielding, and night-setting. The combinations should be determined on the basis of gear configurations and the susceptible species likely to be caught by fleets, and in full



consultation with fishers operating in susceptible areas. Specification should comply with the minimum standards as set out in international agreed guidelines.

- In a given fishery, should no such technical solutions be known to minimise seabird bycatch, and where there is compelling conservation need, spatial and temporal measures should be applied until alternative technical solutions can be implemented.

We therefore urge you to take the necessary steps to ensure that seabird bycatch will be tackled, in particular through establishing baseline management measures in every sea basin of the annexes of the Technical Measures Regulation.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ariel Brunner".

Ariel Brunner  
Senior Head of Policy  
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy S. Percy".

Jeremy Percy  
Executive Director  
Low Impact Fishers of Europe