

# NGO Bloom cries foul over alleged German, Dutch electric fishing infringements

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The French environmental NGO Bloom has taken issue with derogations granted by Germany for a pulse fishing vessel, as well as the numbers of Dutch vessels allegedly still using the method after its formal ban by the EU [in August 2019](#).

Bloom had previously led the campaign to get so-called pulse trawling -- the use of electric current passed over the seafloor to catch valuable flatfish -- banned in the EU.

The ban came in two stages: firstly, a drastic reduction in the number of vessels permitted to use pulse gear, before a total and final ban comes into place in June 2021.

However, according to Bloom, Germany breached the new legislation by granting an electric fishing derogation to the vessel Bra-2 Butendiek in April 2020. Under the current terms, no new pulse fishing derogations are permitted, as has been the case since last August.

"Germany assumes the Presidency of the Council of the European Union since July 2020," said Frederic Le Manach, scientific director of Bloom. "It is more than problematic that this country is in such a clear breach of the regulation, while its behavior should be absolutely exemplary."

In this instance, the Bra-2 is owned by the Dutch Kraak family, which also owns a separate pair of pulse trawlers operating in Germany.

Prior to the ban, the Dutch fishing fleet had been granted derogations for 5% of its vessels to be outfitted with pulse trawl gear for research purposes. The fleet had later come under intense scrutiny in 2017 when it was discovered that 30% of its vessels were now using electric fishing gear to catch flatfish.

Bloom claims that the strategy of investing in foreign vessels to further exceed their permitted numbers of pulse derogations was a tactic used by Dutch firms in the past, and noted this with the European Commission in 2017 and 2019.

Furthermore, Bloom has taken issue with the number of Dutch fishing vessels still using pulse gear during the transition period leading up to the full ban next year.

A statutory 5% of the Dutch fleet is legally permitted to keep using pulse gear until next June, corresponding to 15 vessels, yet in its last complaint, Bloom noted that the Dutch fisheries minister has permitted 22 vessels to retain the gear for commercial fishing while a further 20 vessels have been allowed to continue pulse trawling for research purposes.

In response to a letter from Bloom, the European Ombudsman has opened an inquiry and asked the European Commission to explain the lack of infringement procedures taken.