

EUROPEAN UNION REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF IATTC RESOLUTION C-19-04 ON SEA TURTLES FOR LONGLINE AND PURSE SEINE VESSELS IN 2025

1. Purpose

The objective of this report is to report on implementation by the European Union (EU) of its obligations under Resolution C-19-04, aimed at mitigating the impacts on sea turtles. The report presents information on all recorded interactions with sea turtles during longline and purse seine fishing operations in the IATTC area during 2025, reports progress on the implementation of the FAO Guidelines and complementary measures to reduce the by-catch, injury, and mortality of sea turtles in fishing operations, and to ensure the safe handling and release of all captured sea turtles with a view to improving their survival.

As regards the surface longline fishery, the Spanish baseline information comes from the Spanish Observer Program for Surface Longliners implemented in regional fisheries management organizations of Spain's General Secretariat for Fisheries. In the case of Portugal, interaction data are consolidated from the information submitted for individual vessels to the Directorate-General for Natural Resources, Safety and Maritime Services (DGRM).

Regarding the purse seine fishery, the analysed data come from the Spanish National Tuna Observer Program, implemented by the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) and the IATTC. Together, both programs aim to achieve 100% observer coverage, in accordance with the guidelines of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP).

2. Regulatory framework for the mitigation of sea turtle bycatch

2.1. International and EU framework

- IATTC Resolution C-19-04: *Resolution to Mitigate Impacts on Sea Turtles* mandating that CPCs implement measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality, including the use of circle hooks, proper handling and release techniques, and increased observer coverage.
- Regulation (EU) 2021/56 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 January 2021 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Convention area and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 520/2007. Article 16 sets out obligations on EU Member States and Union fishing vessels concerning the protection of sea turtles to implement IATTC Resolution C-19-04.
- FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations (2011). Although IATTC Resolution C-19-04 already incorporates the main elements of these FAO guidelines, specific compliance sections are included in national and regional regulations to ensure full alignment with best practices for reducing sea turtle bycatch and mortality.

2.2. National rules and regulations

Measures to mitigate impacts on sea turtles are included in the fishing authorisations ("Authorisations of the Foreign Fleet" (AFE)) issued by Spain's General Secretariat for

Fisheries. AFEs are the mandatory authorization that Spanish-flagged vessels must have to exercise fishing activities. AFEs contain annexes that set require vessels to comply with the conservation and management measures adopted by the regional fisheries management organisations of which the EU is a member and where the vessel is authorised to fish. The mandatory provisions set out in these Annexes include the implementation of measures necessary to release sea turtles alive and the obligation to record any interactions with sea turtles.

As regards longline vessels, Article 19 of Order AAA/658/2014 of 22 April 2014 regulating surface longline gear fishing for highly migratory species and creating a unified surface longline census, lays down rules on sea turtles.

As regards purse seiners, these are subject to the provisions of Spain's National Plan for the Management of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) (Annex 1). In addition to laying down FAD measures for the IATTC area, the Plan includes a specific set of measures to mitigate catches of juveniles and non-target species which provide for the use of non-entangling FADs to prevent "ghost fishing" or the capture of non-target species, such as sea turtles. This plan is updated annually to keep it aligned with conservation and management measures adopted by RFMOs.

3. Measures to mitigate impacts on sea turtles implemented by the EU fleet operating in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in 2025

3.1. Longline fishery

The following mitigation measures are used by the EU longline fleet to reduce interactions with sea turtles:

- Use of large circle hooks.
- Use of fin fish for bait.
- Adequate disentanglement equipment is carried on board (line-cutter and de-hooker sticks; vessels are equipped with rods to release accidentally caught turtles).
- Release techniques are applied to return the animal to the sea ensuring higher survival rates and reducing post-release mortality, with the species assessed and identified before release.
- Operators are informed of time and area closures decided by IATTC.
- Manuals are regularly made available to the industry, containing instructions and information on the proper use of equipment and identification of the various species of marine turtles. An example of such a manual is the one developed as part of Spain's "FIP BLUES" project to promote the conservation of endangered, threatened and protected species. The manual is updated every year and is available in several languages and in a poster format (Annex 2) for dissemination to vessels.
- Crew have information on handling methods to assess the condition of the turtles before releasing, identifying the species name, returning to the sea, ensuring higher survival rates and reducing post-release mortality.

- All interactions are recorded in the logbook.
- At national level, there are policies to encourage vessel operators of pelagic longliners to adopt measures to avoid bycatches of sea turtles, in different international areas.

Table 1. Mitigation measures for sea turtles applied by Spanish LL vessels in 2025

Vessel ID	Vessel Name	Only uses large circle hooks (as per definition in C-19-04)	Only uses fin fish for bait
27794	AMENCER DOUS		X
21571	BALUEIRO SEGUNDO		X
25473	BONDAÑA		X
25536	BOUSO		X
25500	COSTA AZUL UNO		X
25776	COYO CINCO		X
27045	COYO SEPTIMO		X
24809	ECCE HOMO DIVINO		X
26647	ECCE HOMO GLORIOSO		X
27812	ECLIPSE CUATRO		X
22405	FRANIVAN		X
26485	GLACIAL		X
26791	HESPER		X
25542	ILLA GAVEIRA		X
25644	MAR ARAL		X
25864	MAR DE CRETA		X
100053	MAR DE ESCOCIA		X
25873	MARGUEL		X
26761	MARIANE		X
23382	NOVO XEIXAL		X
24508	NUEVO JOSMARU		X
26861	NUEVO MONTE VENTOSO		X
26004	NUEVO PLEAMAR		X
24610	O GALOPIN		X
24186	OLEAJE		X
25952	PEDRA DA GRELO		X
23302	PEDRO XIBANO		X
25809	PICO TRESMARES		X
25556	PLAYA MUIÑO VELLO		X
24967	PUNTAL DE AGUETE		X
23528	RAMSES DOUS		X
15778	RIO LANDRO		X
15824	RUNO		X
24862	SALAIÑO		X
24441	SIEMPRE JUAN LUIS		X
27797	SOCYO		X
26780	TALASA		X

10258	TEMIS PRIMERO		X
25564	YANQUE		X

Table 2. Mitigation measures for sea turtles applied by Portuguese LL vessels in 2025

Vessel ID	Vessel Name	Only uses large circle hooks (as per definition in C-19-04)	Only uses fin fish for bait
PRT000023097	BALUEIRO	X	
PRT000019088	HEMISFÉRIO NORTE	X	
PRT000022914	AVÔ MÚSICO		X
PRT000023398	MAR DE JAVA		X

3.2. Purse seine fishery

In addition to AFEs and the National Plan for the Management of FADs, which includes the use of non-entangling FADs, the following measures are implemented by the Spanish fisheries administration, purse seine associations, and scientific institutes to mitigate the impact of purse seine fisheries on sea turtles:

- **Code of Good Practices on Board Purse Seiners (BBPP Project).** The code outlines a series of best practices aimed at improving onboard operations and the selectivity of tropical tuna purse seine fisheries and promoting responsible and sustainable fishing that minimizes impacts on the marine ecosystem. As regards sea turtles, the code integrates the recommendations of four tuna RFMOs, including the guidelines for handling and releasing entangled turtles in FADs, the specimens entangled in the purse seine net or if they come on-board in the brailing phase. See Annex 3 and: <https://www.azti.es/productos/guia-de-buenas-practicas-de-manejo-y-liberacion-%20de-especies-asociadas-en-atuneros-de-cerco-congeladores/>
- **Design and use of Roller “Hopper” with Ramp for the Release of Sharks and Other Bycatch Species:** These are selective trays with evacuation ramps that prevent species such as sea turtles from falling into the fish hold. They allow safe return to the sea through zero-contact handling, improving crew safety and increasing the survival rate of vulnerable species.
- **Workshop on marking of mobulid rays, sharks, and turtles (2025):** Four workshops were held throughout 2025 with 30 crew members present to obtain a greater amount of data and monitor the mortality of these species that usually appear in very few fishing operations and therefore are difficult to study. The project has resulted in the tagging of 2 specimens.
- **Project for the assessment of mortality of endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species (2025 – 2026):** In 2025 and 2026, trips were undertaken with scientific experts for the tagging of ETP, mostly sharks. During the last trip, 60 specimens were tagged.
- **Improved Safety on Board during implementation of Good Practices for the release of ETP Species on board freezer tuna seiners:** The project includes the following activities: 1) Evaluation of possible occupational risks associated with the handling of ETP

species during different operational phases on board purse seine tuna vessels. 2) Survey of existing safety materials in other fleets or fisheries. 3) Development of protocols and tools that increase crew safety during dangerous species release manoeuvres. 4) Testing of prototype safety tools and protocols during exploratory trips to validate their usefulness.

- **Optimization in the use of FADs:** The general objective of this work is to continue with the study of the evolution in the use and dynamics of FADs to evaluate the need to adjust operations and continuously improve the efficiency and sustainability of the fleet. To this end, the data series will be fed until 2025 to develop indicators of the effectiveness of the measures implemented and identify new approaches to reduce the impact of the loss and stranding of FADs.
- **Training courses on good management practices and release of species to sailors (2025):** Five workshops were held during 2025 for all RFMOs, with the participation of more than 70 attendees from OPAGAC vessels.

4. Interactions with sea turtles in 2025

4.1. Longline fishery

As regards the Spanish fleet, interactions between surface longline fisheries and sea turtles were reported by onboard observers and electronic monitoring systems within the framework of the Surface Longline Observer Program coordinated by Spain's General Secretariat for Fisheries.

In 2025, a total of 10 trips by LL vessels were observed in the IATTC Convention Area under the programme, of which 4 by human observers and 6 with electronic monitoring.

In total, 457 hauls were observed, with a total of 14 interactions with sea turtles. Of these, 10 interactions were detected by human observation (228 hauls) and 4 interactions through electronic monitoring (229 hauls): one specimen of *Chelonia mydas* (TUG), 12 specimens of the species *Dermochelys coriacea* (DKK) and one unidentified specimen at species level (TTX). All specimens were released alive.

Table 3. Interactions of Spanish LL vessels with sea turtles in 2025

FAO Code	Species	Number of specimens
TUG	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	1
DKK	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	12
TTX	<i>Testudinata (unidentified)</i>	1

As regards the Portuguese fleet, four LL vessels were active in the IATTC Convention Area in 2025. During 2025, 7 interactions with sea turtles were reported by these vessels. All turtles were released alive.

Table 4. Interactions with sea turtles in Portuguese LL vessels.

Date	Position	Scientific Name	FAO code	Status	Action taken
27/03/2025	21°07'S 79°23'W	<i>Caretta caretta</i> (loggerhead turtle)	TTL	Alive	Released
04/04/2025	18°37'S 78°19'W	<i>Caretta caretta</i> (loggerhead turtle)	TTL	Alive	Released
19/04/2025	19°10'S 78°06'W	<i>Chelonia agassizii</i> (Galápagos green turtle)	KEZ	Alive	Released
13/11/2025	21°56'S 91°02'W	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> (leatherback turtle)	DKK	Alive	Released
04/12/2025	22°39'S 90°51'W	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> (leatherback turtle)	DKK	Alive	Released
06/12/2025	22°17'S 90°38'W	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> (leatherback turtle)	DKK	Alive	Released
25/01/2025	19°02'S 100°41'W	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i> (leatherback turtle)	DKK	Alive	Released

4.2. Purse seine fishery:

Information on interactions of the purse seine fleet operating in the IATTC Convention Area with sea turtles come from observer data, both from the IATTC Programme and from the Spanish National Tuna Observer Program (PNOT), managed by the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (EIO).

In 2025, 30 fishing trips with 551 hauls were observed by the IEO and IATTC. In total, 13 interactions with sea turtles were recorded during the hauls and associated with floating objects. All of them were released alive. Also, 1 sighting of a sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*, DKK) swimming free was observed.

Table 5. Interactions of Spanish PS vessels with sea turtles in 2025

FAO code	Species	Number of specimens	Status
TUG	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	1	Alive
LKV	<i>Lepidochelys olive</i>	10	Alive
TTL	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	2	Alive

5. Annexes

Annex 1 – National Plan for the Management of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs)

Annex 2 – FIP BLUES poster for safe handling and release of sea turtles

Annex 3 – Code of Good Practices on Board Purse Seiners