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Brussels, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018**Environmentalists press the European Parliament to ban innovative pulse fishing gear****- For immediate release -**

The anti-pulse lobby peaked this week in Brussels with their misleading campaign in light of the crucial vote on a new regulation for the conservation of fishery resources that will take place on 16 January 2018. The European fishing industry believes that this is the umpteenth attempt to demonize an innovative fishing method. Radical NGOs are trying to sabotage the difficult compromise<sup>1</sup> reached in the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament back in November that represented a democratic, reasonable and sustainable solution. Europêche urges the European Parliament Plenary to respect this compromise in order to allow innovation and the development of new sustainable fishing techniques which is the sole way the sector can adapt to new legislative scenarios such as the landing obligation.

Pulse fishing is a fishing technique that targets flatfish, in particular sole, using electrical stimulation. Currently three Member States<sup>2</sup> have issued licenses allowing this fishery in certain areas of the North Sea. Thanks to years of research and investments, this fishing method has been improved to the point that the catch of non-targeted species has been reduced by 50% and the fuel consumption by 46%. Additionally, the gear has a lighter impact on the sea bed reducing the area swept by 20%. The vessels equipped with this technology are strictly monitored and controlled by the use of black boxes to ensure that the low levels of voltage used do not exceed what is permitted by Law.

Pulse fishing has been a much debated innovation, widely discussed in the Brussels' arena in light of the newly proposed Regulation on conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures. The European fishing industry represented by Europêche defends all fishing methods permitted by Law. The sector believes that if properly managed, all fishing techniques are sustainable, including pulse fishing.

Javier Garat, President of Europêche declared: *"We are confronted with a new offensive orchestrated by the radical environmentalists in a further attempt to discredit a fishing gear, in line with a previous campaign against deep sea bottom trawling. We reiterate that there are no good or bad fishing gears, it all depends on their use. It is frustrating that after so much time and work with scientists to find a way to reduce the impact of fishing gears, when the system is finally developed, some just try to demonize it."*

EU fishermen comply with some of the strictest fishing rules in the world and pulse fishing is no exception. Bottom trawling is one of the most widely used fishing methods in the EU and many of these fisheries are certified by different independent organisations as being highly sustainable.

Europêche argues that pulse fishing could have a valuable role to play in breaking new ground for other innovative technologies. However, there are still some open questions about possible unintended by-effects in the marine environment which are being identified and addressed by the industry together with international scientists in ongoing independent research. Despite these efforts, fraudulent and misleading information about the environmental impact of the pulse has been widely spread by some NGOs with the sole objective to ban particularly this fishing method and generally bottom trawling.

Javier Garat concluded: *“Over the past few years we have witnessed EU legislation vilifying many types of fishing practices, seeing blanket bans as the answer: driftnet ban, deep sea ban or discard ban. Blanket bans are never the answer and have catastrophic consequences for the sector, particularly in the context of the landing obligation which forces EU vessels to be even more efficient and selective. EU legislation must be flexible enough to enable progress towards innovative fishing gears. Fishing practices vary throughout the EU and so regional legislation is key, not EU-wide bans, nor unfair demonization.”*

Accordingly, Europêche urges the European Parliament to stick to the compromise reached in the Fisheries Committee after months of consultation and negotiation with all interested parties, in order to allow innovation and the development of new sustainable fishing techniques.

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**Europêche** represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 12 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 8 EU Member States: DE, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, LV, PL.

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1. The text agreed in the Fisheries Committee would permit electric pulse trawl on a commercial scale without limitation on the number of permits provided that a positive scientific assessment is issued by the EC scientific committee (STECF) after a four-year trial period. During this period, pulse fishing would be restricted to 5% of the existing vessels in that métier (i.e. using a specific type of gear in the same way). This fishery would also be subject to rigorous technical and control conditions.

2. The Netherlands (84), Germany (8) and UK (5).