

Ms Charlina Vitcheva  
Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries  
European Commission  
Jozef II-straat 99  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Dun Laoghaire, 15 June 2022

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

**Subject: Deep-sea access regulation (ref. (EU)2016/2336) and ICES advice on VME scenarios and existing deep-sea fishing areas for EU waters in the Northeast Atlantic**

The North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) was recently informed of the potential implementation of almost 100 new fishing restriction zones due to the presence of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) between 400m and 800m deep along the coast of Spain, France and Ireland.

The AC recalls that the Commission presented the state of play on the upcoming Implementing Act for the Deep-sea Access Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 and the [final ICES advice \(January 2021\)](#)<sup>1</sup> which establishes the existing deep-sea fishing areas and the locations where VMEs are occurring or are likely to occur. Based on this advice, the Commission would choose one of the four scenarios and options proposed by ICES to fix the footprint and the VMEs in the implementing act to be adopted in 2022.

In light of this, the AC would greatly appreciate to receive clarification on the timeline and state of play of the process leading to the adoption of the abovementioned Implementing Act, as well as an indication on how the Advisory Councils can contribute with recommendations on the scenarios and options proposed by ICES. Stakeholders involved inside ACs can indeed provide useful input regarding such scientific work, especially regarding the geographical scale of analysis, the way to organize the freeze of the fishing footprint and the buffer zones.

We remain at your disposal to elaborate on this request should this be necessary.  
Thank you for your attention on this matter. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Emiel Brouckaert  
NWWAC Chairman

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<sup>1</sup> Updated with [advice from February 2022](#) specifying the relevant coordinates for EU waters only.

