

ICES VME advice

SWWAC, 29 April 2026

Presented by Simon Jennings

ICES Advisory Committee, vice-chair



ICES
CIEM

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

Conseil International pour
l'Exploration de la Mer



Evolution and benchmarking of ICES VME advice



ICES last benchmarked the methods for providing VME advice in 2022.

The benchmarked methods are currently used to advise the EC.

Advice at any point in time is provided based on available evidence and methods at that time.

But the evidence base and methods are continually evolving.

Evolution and benchmarking of ICES VME advice



Since 2022, there have been several science and policy developments of relevance to the ICES advice.

And ICES received wide-ranging feedback on the methods and advice from expert groups, requesters of advice and stakeholders.

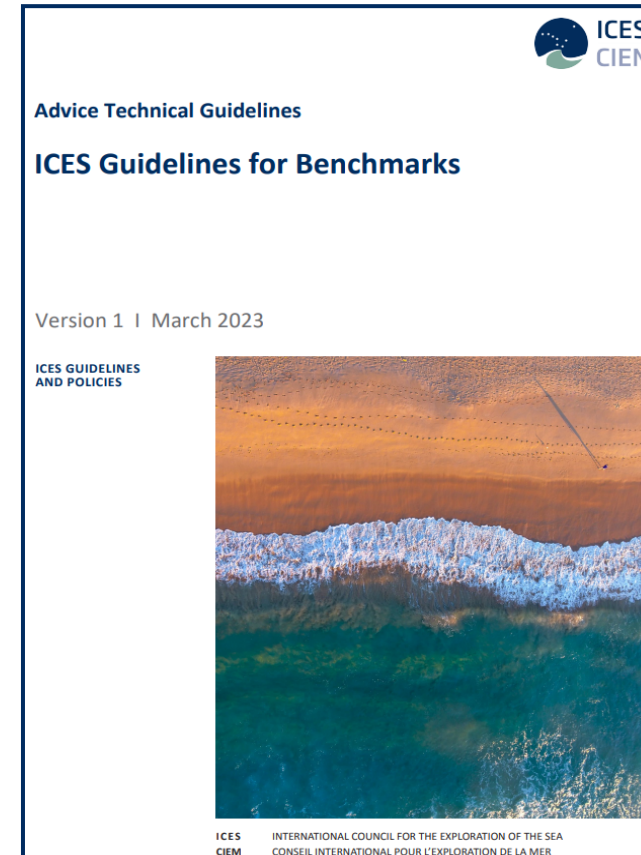
So, we need benchmarking to ensure our advice is still based on the best available science.

ICES has scheduled benchmarking of methods for providing VME advice in 2027. The benchmark is preceded by many preparatory actions.

Benchmarking

ICES uses the 'benchmark process' to peer-review and incorporate new science for use in the provision of all types of recurrent advice.

Guidelines formalise prioritisation of benchmarks, their scope and planning. Full benchmarks review methods, assumptions and data.



Towards benchmarking

Preparatory actions are taking account of new research/ science, including new analytical methods, and issues raised by advice requesters, scientists and stakeholders

Towards benchmarking

Completed actions



Topic	Action	Timescale
Quality of historic VME data in ICES VME Database	Reviewed and as necessary corrected historical records included in ICES VME Database (WG Deep-water Ecology).	2024-25
Predictive habitat modelling of areas where VME are likely to occur	Workshop on the Use of Predictive Habitat Models in ICES Advice and chaired by Kerry Howell, UK and Chris Rooper, Canada.	2025
Transparency of analytical process	Increased documentation of process and including relevant code in ICES Transparent Assessment Framework.	2024-25

Towards benchmarking

Ongoing and planned actions

Topic	Action	Timescale
Impacts of static gear	Workshop on static gear impacts, planned for 2026, preceded by preparatory analysis.	2026
Review of, and options to improve, VME index	Workshop on the VME index, planned for 2026, preceded by preparatory analysis.	2026
Spatial scales of analysis	Testing consequences of grid systems used for VME and VMS analyses.	2025-26

ICES 2026 VME advice



Recurrent advice to EU on areas where VME are known to occur or are likely to occur in EU waters (scenarios C, D and E).

Special request (EU) on methodology for assessing fishing pressure with static gear.

Recurrent advice to NEAFC regarding new information on vulnerable habitats and fisheries activities in the NEAFC regulatory areas.

Special request (NEAFC) to inform the 5 yearly renewals of the closed areas under Recommendation 19:2014.

All VME advice is scheduled for release in September 2026




Thank you


Explore, connect, engage

 www.ices.dk

 [ICESmarine](https://www.facebook.com/ICESmarine)

 [icesmarine](https://www.linkedin.com/company/icesmarine)

 [ICESmarine](https://www.youtube.com/ICESmarine)

 [@icesmarine.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/icesmarine.bsky.social)