



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

Dun Laoghaire, xx May 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 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 NWWAC 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 will choose one of the 4 scenarios and options proposed by ICES to fix the footprint and the VMEs in the implementing act to be adopted in 2022 by the Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

In light of this, the NWWAC would greatly appreciate clarification on the timeline and state of play of the process bringing to the adoption of the abovementioned Implementing Act, as well as indication on whether and how the Advisory Council could contribute with recommendations on the scenarios and options proposed by ICES.

The NWWAC remains 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.

