



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/C1/CA/ms

Dear Mr Pavón,

I have the pleasure to inform you that ICES confirmed it can deliver an advice on VMEs in the Outermost regions in a step-wise manner (see Annex I).

This awaited confirmation replies to your Recommendation n°30 “*Possible studies on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in all the Outermost Regions*”, received in July last year ⁽¹⁾ and the Commission’s request to ICES of September 2022.

As you can see from the ICES reply, the engagement of local experts in this context is of utmost importance for the success of this project. Hence, I believe that you, in your role for the CC-RUP, are one of the best placed interlocutors to help identify the local experts and connect them to the scientific experts in ICES ⁽²⁾.

I would like to thank you once again for your eagerness to engage on this topic and for your continued interest in the establishment of the list of VMEs in the Western Waters of the North-East Atlantic. Your Recommendation 30 reflects the proactive and forward oriented thinking, which the Commission expects from all Advisory Councils.

You can count on the full support of my services in this endeavour.

Mr. David Pavón
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⁽¹⁾ Recommendation 30 of CC-RUP about possible studies on VMEs in all the Outermost Regions, 11/07/2022, Ares(2022)5053311

⁽²⁾ “22_13 ICES Non-recurrent advice request: VMEs in the EU Outermost Regions”, 01/09/2022, Ares(2022)6073205 and “Reply to CC-RUP on studies on VMEs”, 01/08/2022. Ares(2022)5496707

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia RUBECK via the functional mailbox of the Advisory Councils MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.


Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

Enclosure: Annex I

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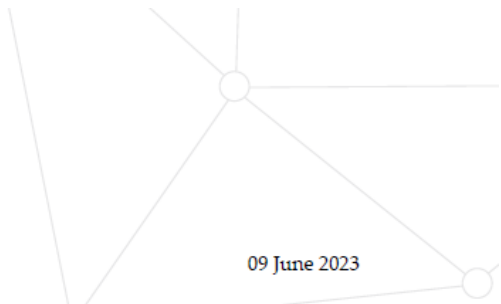
Annex I



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Our Ref: C.24.b/LWC/mo

09 June 2023



Subject: Advice on the list of areas where VMEs are known to occur or are likely to occur and on the existing deep-sea fishing areas (ref. (EU)2016/2336) in EU waters of the Outermost Regions subject to the deep-sea access regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/2336)

Dear Oana,

Thank you for the request advice on a list of areas where VMEs are known to occur or are likely to occur and on the existing deep-sea fishing areas (ref. (EU)2016/2336) in EU waters of the Outermost Regions subject to the deep-sea access regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/2336).

ICES is able to respond to this request with step-wise deliverables, with the first phase as a scoping technical service (review) over a one-year period.

Please note that after evaluation by ACOM, ICES notes that the scope of this request spans large geographical areas between the nine outermost regions and that for some regions there will potential be a scarcity of data and experts. It is important to apply the FAO guidelines with consistency reflect international standards and local knowledge of both fishing practices and the presence of VMEs. It is likely that empirical information will not be as available as in recent ICES advice on VMEs for NEAFC and the EU. The approach must be modified to account for differences in the utility of available data, the breath of local knowledge and fishing practices. Thus this request requires an initial scoping with the following objectives:

- Objective 1: establish a network of experts that are engaged and have access to data/information/knowledge in all 9 regions: engage local experts, knowledge holders and other stakeholders from the Caribbean, Oceanic Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. Also select a core team to lead the work.
- Objective 2: review available methods used in a range of situations to applied FAO guidance on VMEs. The core team to review methods applied across the globe and the complementarity of these methods with the current approach used by ICES in the Northeast Atlantic.
- Objective 3: map the knowledge base, use a participatory approach, and survey to map/identify nursery areas, fishing practices, important ecosystem features, fishing grounds, knowledge of locations of indicators of VMEs and further elements. This information will be further complemented by local scientific experts' information
- Objective 4: achieve agreement on framework and understanding of knowledge base in each region. This is to be done through a workshop which will report on the findings for each region

The scoping and review of available knowledge and data will cover all 9 outermost regions (Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands, Reunion, Mayotte, French Guiana, Martinique, Guadalupe and Saint Martin). Most of these regions are remote/inaccessible with some of the main fisheries dependent on the seamounts. Most have a narrow or nearly inexistent continental shelf which results in limited fishing grounds; for instance, the Azores region has 1% of the EEZ is available for fishing with the remaining area averaging 3000 meters deep. Across the 9 regions there is a difference in fishing practices and scientific study. ICES' will deliver as a technical service (review) using a mix of both qualitative and quantitative scientific knowledge. The budget is as outlined in the below table and split across two calendar years. Please let us know if you can agree to this.