

## EU request for a technical service to review the knowledge base and analytical frameworks required to map where VMEs are known or likely to occur as well as fishing activity of deep-sea fish in all EU outermost regions

### Service summary

This technical service (review) has been carried out as part of a stepwise deliverable towards a special request from the EU (DGMARE) that aims to advise on a list of areas where VMEs are known or are likely to occur as well as 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). See agreed and original text below.

ICES conducted a technical service to review the knowledge base and analytical frameworks required to map where VMEs are known or likely to occur, as well as fishing activity of deep-sea fish in all EU outermost regions. This was done in the form of a workshop (Workshop on the Occurrence of VMEs [Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems] and Fishing Activities in EU waters of the Outermost Regions; WKOUTVME) that reviewed and reported on the knowledge base in each region, available methods used in a range of situations and locations to apply FAO guidance for the identification of VMEs, and analytical frameworks and their applicability in each region (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Reunion Island and Saint-Martin [France], Azores and Madeira [Portugal], and the Canary Islands [Spain]).

The review is available in the ICES library: <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.26057743>

### Request

The EU (DGMARE) and ICES agreed that the required advice that was requested (see below original request text) was not yet possible. To address the request, it was agreed that ICES would work toward stepwise deliverables, with the first phase as a scoping technical service (review) over a one-year period.

Agreed EU (DGMARE) request to ICES:

*EU requests ICES as a technical service to review the knowledge base and analytical frameworks required to map where VMEs are known or likely to occur as well as on fishing activity of deep-sea fish in all EU outermost regions (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Reunion Island and Saint-Martin (France), Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and the Canary Islands (Spain)). This technical service should consist of the following:*

- a) *Establish a network of experts that are engaged and have access to data/information/knowledge in all nine regions. Engage local experts, knowledge holders, and other stakeholders from the Caribbean, Oceanic Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean. Select a core team to lead the work.*
- b) *Review available methods used in a range of situations to apply 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.*
- c) *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 additional elements. This information will be further complemented by local scientific experts' information.*
- d) *Achieve agreement on framework and understanding of knowledge base in each region. This is to be done through a workshop that will report on the findings for each region.*

Original EU (DGMARE) request to ICES:

*On 5 January 2021, ICES provided an advice to DG MARE 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)". This advice was completed on 7 February 2022 by ICES Technical service "Data output of the ICES 2021 advice on the deep-sea access regulation (ref. (EU)2016/2336) as coordinates for EU waters area only". The advice is based on ICES Ecoregions and the technical service is delivering coordinates for the EEZs of the EU Member States of the North-East Atlantic, based on the VLIZ map. The 9 Outermost Regions of the EU (French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Reunion Island and Saint-Martin (France), Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and the Canary Islands (Spain)) have not yet been part of ICES deliveries. Further to Recommendation 30 of the Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CC-RUP)2, DG MARE requests ICES to:*

*To provide an 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 in the waters of the EU Outermost Regions that are subject to the deep-sea access regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/2336)*

*To provide data output as coordinates for the waters of the EU Outermost Regions that are subject to the deep-sea access regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/2336) on the model of the 2021 and 2022 ICES advices, the outputs are requested as:*

*Deliver the coordinates of the list of VMEs locations in cvs, .xlsx and .shp files, including the descriptions “VME\_Csquare”, “VME\_Habitat”, “VME\_Indicator” and “VME\_Elements” for all scenario and all options.*

*Deliver the coordinates of the footprint “Footprint\_all”, “Footprint\_mobile”, “Footprint\_static in .csv, .xlsx and .shp files, also produce maps in pdf including VMEs polygons.*

*Deliver the footprint for static gears, for mobile-contacting gears and a combined footprint in the EEZs of the Outer-most Regions that are relevant for the deep-sea access regulation according to its article 2 paragraph (1) and applied to all scenario and all options.*

*Provide the pdf maps representing the VMEs in EU waters of the Outermost Regions in question for all scenario and all options with the “footprint all” pattern as background.*

*Recommended citation:* ICES. 2024. EU request for a technical service to review the knowledge base and analytical frameworks required to map where VMEs are known or likely to occur as well as fishing activity of deep-sea fish in all EU outermost regions. *In* Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2024. ICES Advice 2024, sr.2024.10. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.26058115>