



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,  
MARE/C1/CA/ms/Ares

Dear Mr Sverdrup-Jensen,

I wish to thank you for the letter of EAPO entitled “ICES advice on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems”, dated 4 August 2023 <sup>(1)</sup>.

The European Commission had already taken note of the report prepared by the Killibegs Fishermen’s Organisation (KFO) as it was sent to my services at the time of its release in June 2023. We had then informed the KFO that we transmitted the report to ICES for their consideration and for review by the experts working on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs).

I wish to underline that, for both ICES advice on VMEs released in 2021 and in 2023, all stakeholders – and notably KFO – were fully included in the process and could take part to the advice drafting groups as observers.

This allowed all interested parties to make comments and raise issues, which are, I believe, best addressed in these fora, with the relevant scientists and in a collaborative manner. I note that the concerns listed in the KFO report was raised neither during the advice drafting process, nor during the ICES methodology benchmark which took place in April 2022.

However, I remain convinced that the best use of top scientific inputs lies within the scientific process, and we remain committed to encouraging stakeholders’ involvement in the preparatory stages of this process.

Many thanks again for sharing this report and rest assured that it has been transmitted to ICES.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA

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<sup>(1)</sup> ARES (2023)5421668

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