

Evaluation of the Council Regulation (EC) 734/2008 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears

Targeted bilateral consultations

Targeted bilateral consultations are an important part of public stakeholder consultation activities for the evaluation of the Council Regulation (EC) 734/2008 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas from adverse impacts of bottom fishing gears (VME Regulation). They aim to gather more technical detail and consider more specific questions and allow more free form input from the interviewees than the public online survey.

The bilateral consultations are carried out by the expert(s) of DG MARE B1 with a limited group of relevant addressees as structured consultations using the most feasible means. The consultations will be carried out in English, and in case they are conducted through digital means they will be recorded for the ease of reference if agreed by the interviewees.

Consultations will be planned with the aim to finalise them at the same time as the [public online consultation](#) (the survey) by 5 February 2024.

General questions

1. What is your organization's role in the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas outside of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations/Arrangements (RFMO/As) from bottom fishing activities?
2. Does your organization implement or otherwise work on or with the VME Regulation? If yes, how? What does it do?
3. What do you consider would be different in the absence of the EU's VME Regulation? What would be the most prominent consequences of stopping applying the VME Regulation?
4. How do you perceive the state of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas outside of RFMO/As? Apart from fishing with bottom gears, what are the other threats to vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas outside of RFMO/As?
5. Has the EU done enough to protect the vulnerable marine ecosystems from bottom fishing gears in the high seas outside of RFMO/As? If not, what further actions could be taken?
6. If the VME Regulation was to be amended, what do you think should be changed?
7. Would you like to add anything?

Specific questions

- A. Do you think the VME regulation has changed the way the deep-sea fishing with bottom gears in the high seas outside of RFMO/As is carried out?

- B. Has the implementation of the VME Regulation improved the status of the marine ecosystems in the concerned geographical area?
- C. Are there any factors that have affected, either positively or negatively, progress towards the objectives of the VME Regulation?
- D. Is the VME Regulation consistent with other EU policies and legislation?
- E. Is the VME Regulation well adapted to the technological and scientific progress that has appeared since its introduction?
- F. Is the VME Regulation well adapted to the environmental changes/developments?
- G. Do you think the VME Regulation has increased awareness, across the fishing industry and relevant stakeholders, about the need to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems from fishing with bottom gears in the high seas among the fishers?
- H. What would be the most prominent consequences of stopping applying the VME Regulation?