



measures, has ensured there have been no Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fisheries in the North-East Atlantic for the last ten years or more. To support transparency, NEAFC publishes an annual report on compliance with its regulatory measures, by both Contracting Parties and cooperating non-Contracting (<https://www.neafc.org/compliance>), as well as publicly listing its notified and authorised fishing vessels.

While NEAFC adopts management and control measures for certain commercial fish stocks, it also adopts measures to protect other components of the marine ecosystem (including biodiversity) from potential negative impacts of fisheries. NEAFC thereby contributes to the ecosystem approach to fisheries and the protection of marine biodiversity. This includes preventing significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems through area-based conservation and management measures. In that context, NEAFC has closed large areas to bottom fisheries, and implements rigorous restrictions for other areas.

NEAFC's conservation and management measures, including those related to other parts of the marine ecosystem, do not depend on NEAFC direct scientific processes but rather rely on the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) for scientific advice. While maintaining a clear separation between the management and policy role of NEAFC and the scientific role of ICES, NEAFC has improved its cooperation with ICES, including via regular bilateral meetings to discuss long-term developments, such as multispecies advice, possible climate effects and other ecosystem considerations. ICES develops appropriate research programmes to meet longer-term issues raised by NEAFC and takes these issues into account in presenting its advice to NEAFC. NEAFC also continues to focus efforts on sustainability of deep-sea fisheries, requesting ICES to ensure it reflects NEAFC stock categorisations in its advice on deep sea species. This is in particular with an aim to pay attention to (category 3) rapidly changing or increasing fisheries. NEAFC updated its Memorandum of Understanding with ICES at the end of 2019, ensuring the incorporation of the latest ecosystem considerations into the MOU.



## Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)

A comprehensive binding Recommendation on the protection of VMEs from bottom fisheries is in place in NEAFC. This entered into force in 2014, consolidating earlier recommendations

## Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures

Following a workshop held by ICES testing the use of a designation template for Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM), NEAFC has also started work on identifying OECM. This followed initiation by WGFN of a new working group to assess how NEAFC's enforced and effective measures, such as the VME fisheries restrictions, could be understood as potential OECM designations. The outputs of this group are currently under consideration for both policy and scientific steer from other NEAFC working groups/committees.

### Deep Sea Species and Sharks.

NEAFC continues to take into account the effect of its fishing activities on other biodiversity. The NEAFC joint request with OSPAR (The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) to ICES for scientific advice on deep sea sharks, rays and chimaeras was delivered in 2020. This request for scientific advice was an outcome of the collaboration between OSPAR and NEAFC under the collective arrangement (see below), with the ultimate aim of improving conservation measures for these species, each under the respective competence of each organisation. As yet, it is not clear how the new advice can be translated into practical measures to improve the status of such sharks, rays and chimaeras, but this will be discussed once NEAFC and OSPAR can meet again under the collective arrangement which has been delayed due to external circumstances.

NEAFC continues nevertheless to apply its existing protections. As previously reported, fishing bans under binding Recommendations for conservation and management measures for porbeagle, basking shark

ICES scientific advice on deep sea sharks, rays and chimaeras and on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures.

NEAFC also cooperates with other regional organisations, thereby contributing to increased cooperation and coordination. Since 2020,

and surveillance voyages did improve this situation after the first few months of the pandemic.