

**Question for written answer E-001040/2024  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Izaskun Bilbao Barandica** (Renew)

Subject: North-South discrimination in the closure of vulnerable marine ecosystems

Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 requires the Commission to adopt, on the basis of the best scientific information available, implementing acts to determine the list of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) are likely to occur. ICES has recognised in its scientific advice that there are many more closures in the south of the EU than in the north as a result of an uncorrected bias, attributed to latitude. It has also criticised the imposition of buffer zones that are targeted exclusively at trawling (mobile gears), but apply in practice to all gears and have an unfair impact on static gears.

1. What steps has the Commission taken to address this discrimination between northern and southern regions of Europe, thereby ensuring proportionality and regulatory fairness?
2. Does the Commission consider it appropriate to apply, even in buffer zones, scientific models designed for mobile fishing gears to other (static) fishing gears to which they are not related?
3. Does the Commission consider it proportionate to apply closures targeted at trawling to fixed gear in buffer zones that can be up to three times larger than the VMEs to be protected?

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