

Where do European Vessels Fish?

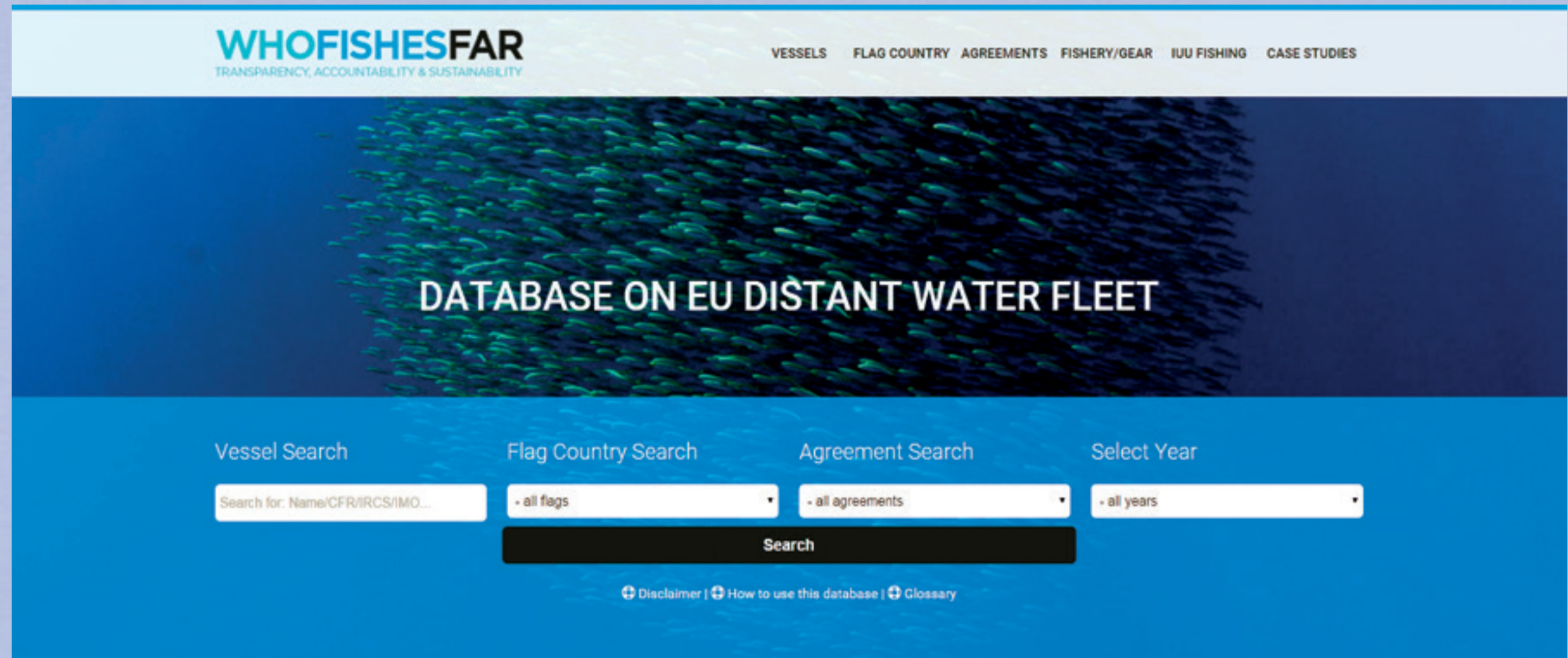
More than 15,000 EU vessels operate in the world's oceans



European vessels have been fishing in the world’s oceans ever since the first pioneering English, French, Spanish and Portuguese fishermen crossed the Atlantic to find cod off the Canadian coast in the early sixteenth century. **It is estimated that 28% of the fish caught by EU vessels for human consumption originates from waters outside the EUⁱ.**

European flagged vessels have operated in foreign waters under a myriad of agreements ever since the formation of the EU. Every European flagged vessel aiming to fish outside European waters, as well as foreign vessels hoping to fish in European waters, must obtain a Fishing Authorisation under the Fisheries Authorisation Regulation (FAR)ⁱⁱ.

Preliminary Results of whofishesfar.org



Transparency and public information

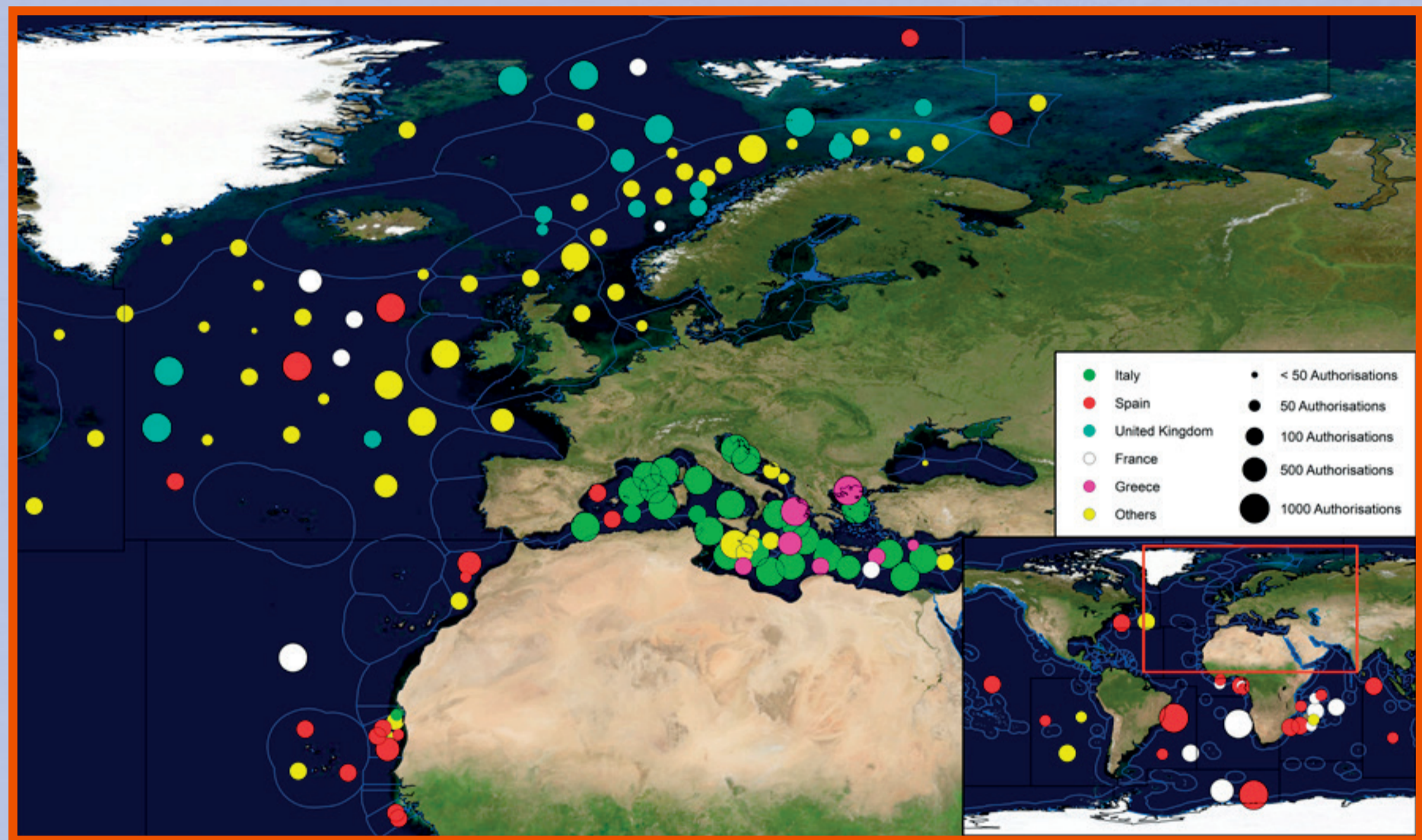
Through an access to information request to the European Commission, Oceana and its NGO colleagues were able to publish, for the first time, how many vessels were authorised to fish outside the EU between 2010 and 2014. The vessels are named and shown where and when they were authorised to fish.

Data reveals more than 15,000 EU vessels fishing outside EU waters

The EU lends its flag to a large fleet of fishing vessels that operate outside EU waters. **Until recently, the only publicly available figure on the number of EU vessels operating outside the EU was from an external study in 2008 that identified 718 vessels for the year 2007ⁱⁱⁱ.**

However, the information obtained by Oceana showed that **between 2010 and 2014, 15,264 fishing vessels have operated under EU flags in external waters** and that all these vessels were authorised under the EU’s FAR. The data provided by the European Commission also includes some authorisations from 2006 to 2020 - amounting to 16,336 unique vessels – including 978 authorisations that were given to third (or non-EU) countries to operate in EU waters. **This makes an average of 3,052 vessels per year – 2,334 more than the only other previously available figure.**

This analysis indicates that the external fleet could be significantly larger than official EU sources suggest and therefore the amount of fish caught by this fleet and consumed in the EU would also be much larger than previously estimated.



Top 5 EU Member States – where do they fish?

Where do EU vessels fish?

Between 2010 and 2014, EU vessels operated in the waters of 17 non-EU countries and in 10 different Regional Fisheries Management Organisations.

In 2014, more than €130 million was paid to 13 countries to secure access to fisheries for the EU fleet under SFPAs^{iv}.

Whofishesfar.org provides data on EU vessels (as well as third country vessels in EU waters) operating under the following agreements:

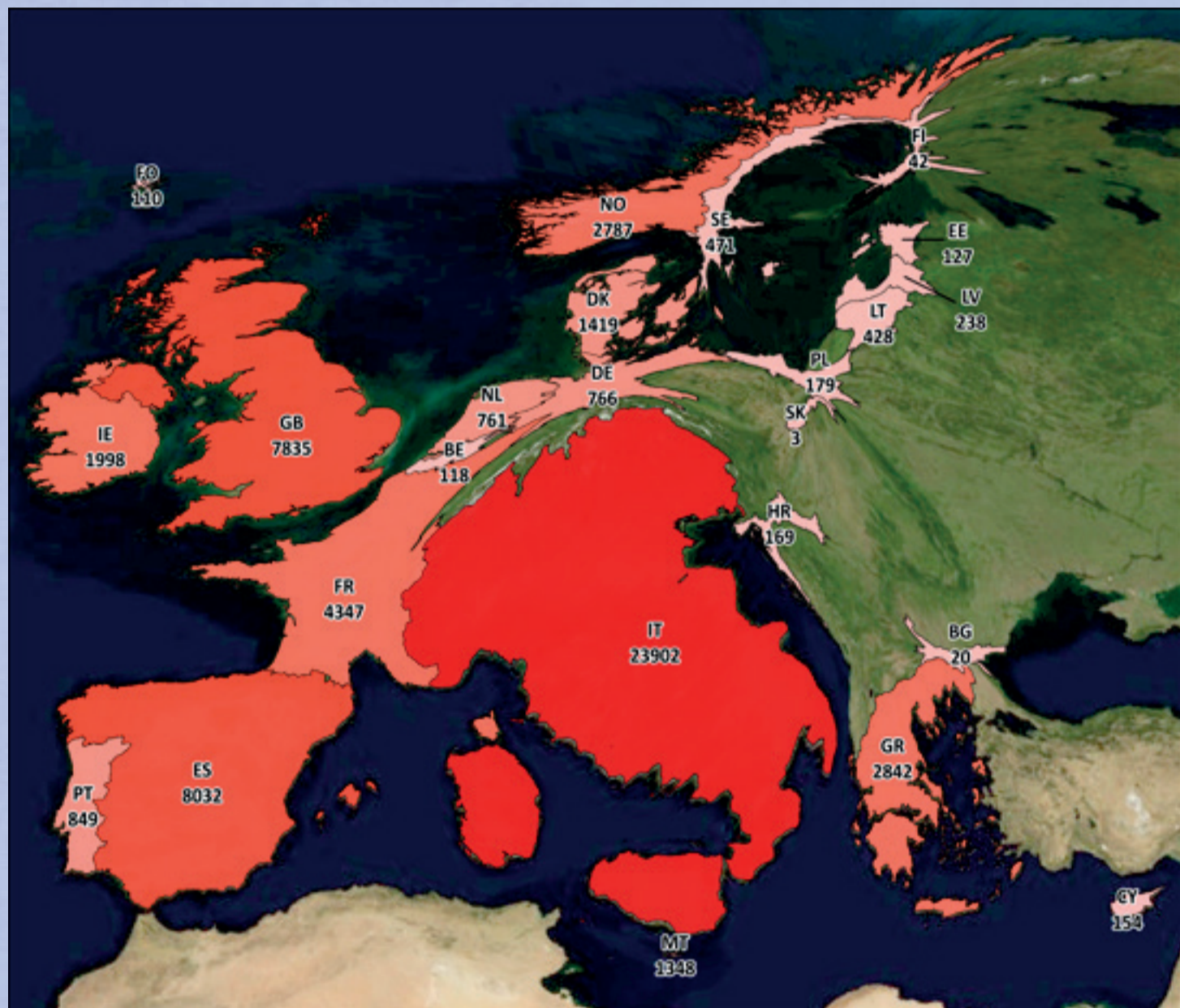
1. Bilateral agreements:

- Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs)^v - SFPAs with non-EU countries permit EU vessels to fish for surplus stocks in the waters of the respective country. Under these agreements, the EU pays the country for access to its fishing resources.
- Access of third country vessels to EU waters in overseas territories. Currently, Venezuela-flagged vessels are fishing in French Guyana, and Seychelles- flagged vessels are fishing in Mayotte^{vi}.

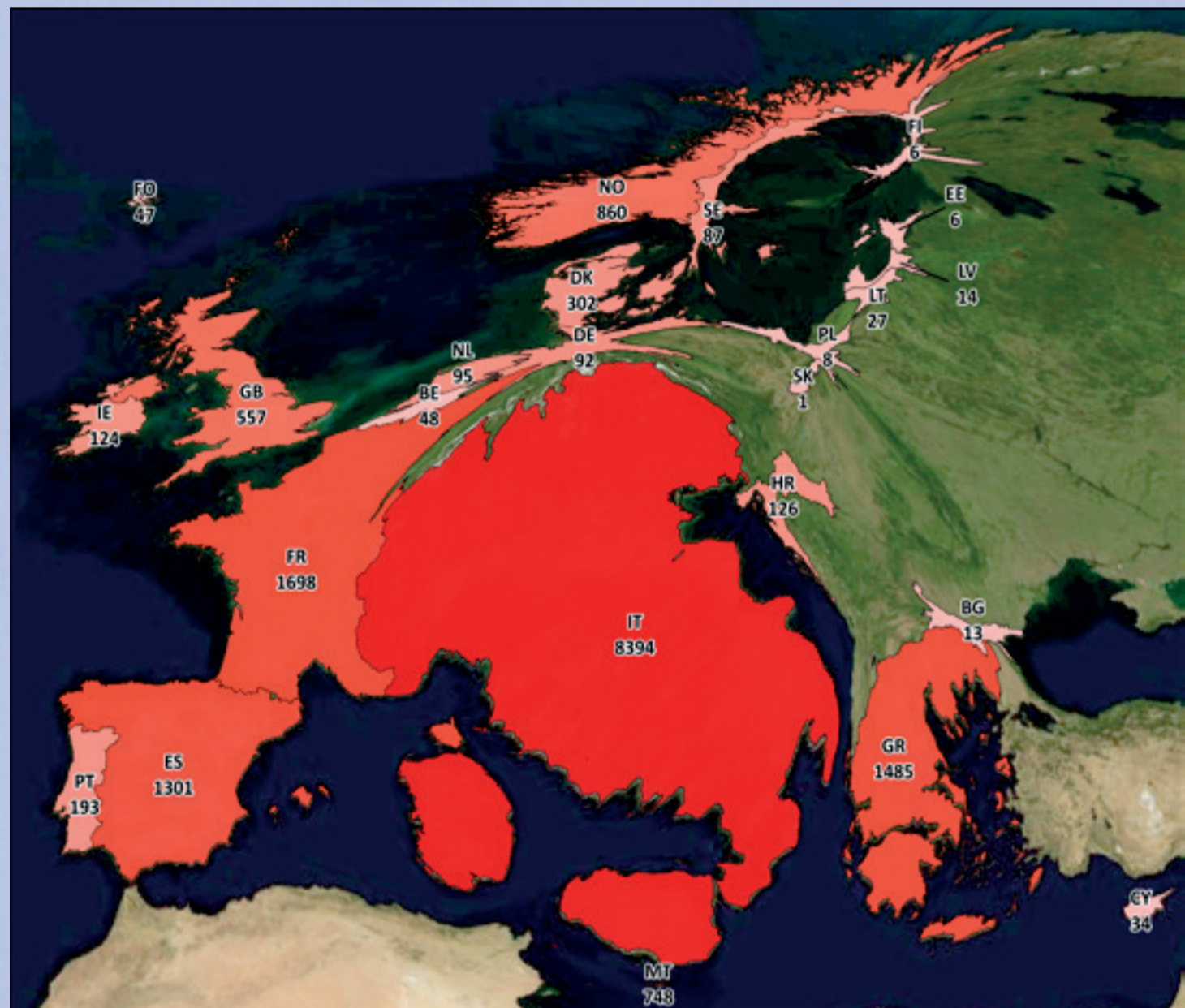
2. Reciprocal agreements

Northern Agreements cover the joint management of shared stocks between the EU and Norway, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands^{vii}. Under FAR authorisations, EU vessels can fish in Norwegian, Icelandic and Faroese waters, and vice versa.

3. Authorisations granted to EU vessels to operate within a regional fisheries management organisation (or RFMO) agreement area or on the high seas^{viii}



Cartogram by number of authorisations



Cartogram by number of vessels

Data gaps in whofishesfar.org

Private Agreements and Chartering Agreements

EU companies also undertake private agreements with certain non-EU countries that grant them private access to fish resources in the waters of these coastal states. This is only allowed in the waters of third countries where there are no SFPAs in place. In addition, EU companies make chartering agreements for their EU vessels to access the resources of certain coastal states in collaboration with local companies.

Even though the vessels benefitting from these agreements fly EU flags or are operated by EU nationals, the EU has not established procedures to ensure that these arrangements comply with EU fisheries or labour laws, nor is there any information publically available.

The access to information request to the EU included basic information on private and chartering agreements. However, the dataset did not provide any information on EU vessels operating under these agreements. **Upon further inquiry, the European Commission revealed that under the current legal framework they do not know which EU operators have made agreements with which countries.**

28% of the fish for human consumption caught by EU vessels originates from waters outside the EU.

15,264 EU vessels were authorised to fish outside EU waters between 2010 and 2014.

In 2014, more than **€130** million was paid to 13 countries to secure access to fisheries for the EU fleet under SFPAs.

Preliminary conclusions

Urgent need for changes to the legal framework

Following the publication and analysis of WhoFishesFar.org, several key problems have been identified within the current regulatory framework^{ix}.

• No public information is available on who operates under FAR

Even if the EU fleet has operated in third country waters under EU sponsored agreements for decades – often supported by taxpayer’s money - basic information about which vessels operate under FAR authorisations or where and what they fish has never been disclosed.

• No requirement exists for private and chartering agreements to adhere to EU standards and laws or to be transparent about fishing activities

• It fails to stop abusive reflagging

There are known instances of EU operators repeatedly and rapidly switching their vessel’s flag to non-EU states and some of these states are known not to tackle illegal fishing. Vessels that have been operating under flags of countries known to be failing in their efforts to stop illegal fishing are free to return back to the EU fleet and obtain a FAR authorisation with relative ease. These operators are then free to re-flag in the EU and benefit from EU access agreements and subsidies.

• IMO numbers are not required

A FAR authorization does not require a vessel to have an IMO number. The lack of a global unique vessel identifier severely hampers any attempt to monitor fishing vessels and fight IUU fishing, as the vessel’s behaviours cannot be tracked on a global scale.

On 10th December, the European Commission released a proposal to revise FAR entitled **Proposal on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets^x**. The EU should use this opportunity to address the shortcomings listed above, and ensure that the activities of EU vessels outside EU waters are transparent, accountable and sustainable.



ⁱ http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/index_en.htm

ⁱⁱ Council Regulation (EC) No 1006/2008 of 29 September 2008 concerning authorisations for fishing activities of Community fishing vessels outside Community waters and the access of third country vessels to Community waters

ⁱⁱⁱ Study on the European External Fleet Contract FISH/2006/02 Final Report, January 2008. Please note that this study looked only at vessels that operated more than 90% of the time outside EU waters. Study on the European External Fleet Contract FISH/2006/02 Final Report, January 2008.

^{iv} http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements/index_en.htm

^v Idem

^{vi} Proposal for Council decision on access by fishing vessels flying the flag of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the exclusive economic zone off the coast of the French department of Guyana COM(2010) 807 final & Proposal for a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of the Seychelles on access for fishing vessels flying the flag of the Seychelles to waters and marine biological resources of Mayotte, under the jurisdiction of the European Union. COM/2014/0139 final

^{vii} http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements/index_en.htm

^{viii} http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/international_agreements/index_en.htm

^{ix} Council Regulation (EC) No 1006/2008 of 29 September 2008 concerning authorisations for fishing activities of Community fishing vessels outside Community waters and the access of third country vessels to Community waters

^x Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets, repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1006/2008 COM/2015/0636 final - 2015/0289 (COD)

