



OSPAR
COMMISSION

OSPAR Annual Report 2021-22

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From our Executive Secretary Dominic Pattinson

Welcome to this year's Annual Report which covers the period from the October 2021 to June 2022. The report demonstrates the continuing efforts of the OSPAR Contracting Parties to help protect and conserve the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

Following the success of the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting last year (and all the work that went into making it such a significant achievement), I thought that this year might be a bit less busy. Not a bit of it!

This year has seen a huge effort by all the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat to develop assessments that will contribute to OSPAR's status assessment of the North-East Atlantic that will be published next year – the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2023. Excellent progress has been made with the agreement of the indicator and thematic assessments covering radioactive substances, the offshore industry, human activities, underwater noise, and marine litter. This is a significant achievement. The assessments provide crucial scientific-based evidence that will be used by OSPAR to inform and underpin measures to address the challenges facing the North-East Atlantic and beyond. Importantly, the assessments and all the underlying data are freely available to all on OSPAR's ever improving Data and Information System (ODIMS) and Assessment Portal (OAP) and I hope they will be widely shared and used by others.

This year has also seen a welcome return to in person meetings. While online meetings have enabled us to continue working through the pandemic, it was clear from the Ministerial Meeting last October and subsequent meetings since then, the benefits of meeting in person should not be underestimated. It helps build trust, strengthens working relationships between colleagues and provides the opportunities for wider discussions and to resolve those tricky issues that are best discussed face to face. So, while we will continue to take advantage of online meetings, it is important that we rebuild the links between Contracting Parties that are so important to how OSPAR works.

Finally, it is with great pleasure to report the expansion of the Secretariat with three new members of staff. Sean Ó Tuathail joined us in March and has fitted in very well and is a very welcome addition to the finance team. Franziska Bils joined more recently on 1 June and will be supporting the team across a number of work areas including the protection of species and habitats and underwater noise. The last addition to the team is Carole Durussel who will join us in September as new Deputy Secretary responsible for cross-cutting issues including international engagement and climate change.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Arctic workshop in Dingle



A farewell from our outgoing Chair Richard Cronin

This report brings to an end my term as Chair and affords me the opportunity to express my gratitude to the Contracting Parties, the Secretariat and the Observers for the trust they have placed in me in leading OSPAR over the last four years. It has again been a great honour and privilege to chair the OSPAR Commission.

Following the Ministerial meeting in October, the challenge this year has been on turning the commitments in OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 into actions.

I am pleased to say that the Contracting Parties have recognised their common purpose and have embraced this challenge and identified over 75 specific tasks that set out how the objectives in the new Strategy will be delivered. I believe this commitment shows the high value that the Contracting Parties place on the work of OSPAR and the benefits it brings.

This common purpose and collaborative way of working were in full evidence at the Arctic workshop held in Dingle (Ireland) in February. Between howling Atlantic storms, Contracting Parties came together to openly discuss how to take forward the commitment in the Ministerial Declaration to protect the Arctic marine environment. The team spirit and constructive discussions, and the efforts colleagues made to get to Dingle through the storms, highlighted everything that is good about OSPAR and our way of working.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the two OSPAR vice-Chairs, Ane-Marie Løvendahl Eskildsen (Kingdom of Denmark) and Jorge Ureta Maeso (Spain) for their constant support and advice.

OSPAR's success is built on its people. The scientists who push the boundaries of our understanding, the conveners, chairs, vice-chairs, and policy experts who skilfully craft actions and measures, the world class Secretariat and the Observers who contribute to our knowledge and actions.

During my term as Chair the Covid-19 pandemic exposed our often fraught relationship with nature. It forced us to reflect on our own personal values.

It demonstrated our need to deepen our cooperation across national boundaries and brought into sharp focus the role of science in ensuring the health of humanity and in turn the planet. In OSPAR the pandemic also brought out the best in people. Their support, solidarity, and a personal commitment to each other and to the North-East Atlantic ensured that OSPAR faces the coming decade better equipped than it has ever been before.

We are stronger together. When faced with global biodiversity, climate, and pollution crises that risk dwarfing any individual effort we must remember that only by working together will we find our way. We owe it to future generations to continue our work with greater urgency and commitment to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, to eliminate pollution and mitigate the effects of climate change in the North-East Atlantic.

As OSPAR celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2022 I look forward to the next 30 years and beyond, confident in the knowledge that working together we can meet and overcome all the challenges in front of us.



Outgoing OSPAR Chair, Richard Cronin (Ireland)

Quality Status Report 2023

The Quality Status Report (QSR) is OSPAR's flagship holistic assessment. The QSR 2023 will look at the status of the North-East Atlantic over the period 2009-2021 and increase our knowledge and understanding of the marine environment through a comprehensive monitoring and assessment process. It is looking both at the current state of the marine environment and ecosystems, and at human activities benefiting from the marine environment and interacting with it. The overarching objective of the QSR 2023 is to provide the scientific knowledge necessary to achieve OSPAR's vision of "a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic Ocean, which is productive, used sustainably and resilient to climate change and ocean acidification".

The QSR 2023 draws links with previous QSRs (2000 and 2010) and with the [Intermediate Assessment 2017](#). It introduces new and ambitious cross-cutting features, with the introduction of a cumulative impact assessment methodology known as the Drivers Activities Pressures State Impact and Response (DAPSIR) approach that supports the delivery of an ecosystem-based approach. The QSR 2023 will also deliver regionally on cross-cutting issues such as climate change and ocean acidification with a newly created expert group fully dedicated to the issue of climate change, delivering a thematic assessment entirely on climate change.

The QSR 2023 is an ambitious collective endeavour involving the whole OSPAR community. More than 450 experts from the 16 Contracting Parties of OSPAR

are contributing to the QSR 2023, with significant support from the EU funded [NEA PANACEA project](#) for biodiversity indicator and thematic assessments.



More than 130 assessments will be delivered as part of OSPAR's flagship holistic assessment of the North-East Atlantic ocean

Preparations for OSPAR's QSR 2023 will continue across OSPAR until the final delivery of the QSR Synthesis Report in mid-2023. OSPAR's group on managing delivery of the QSR met regularly and welcomed the impressive progress made during the last couple of years by OSPAR Committees and subsidiary groups involved in the delivery of QSR products.

A total of more than 130 assessments will be delivered in the framework of the QSR 2023, ranging from common indicator assessments to more strategic thematic assessments that bring together information from a wide evidence base including a

socioeconomic dimension. At the time of writing, more than 80 assessments had been delivered already – or close to 65% of the total.

North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030

At the same time as adopting the [North-East Atlantic Strategy 2030](#) (NEAES 2030) for the next decade, the 2021 OSPAR Commission meeting created an Implementation Plan to ensure that objectives set out in the Strategy are transformed into actions. Learning from the implementation of the previous Strategy, the new Strategy includes timelines for each objective and requires that the necessary resources are in place before new tasks are agreed.

The initial version of the Plan, adopted at the 2021 Commission meeting, contained 30 specific tasks linked directly to the Strategy's objectives. The Plan provides for regular progress reporting and a mechanism for task leads to raise issues of concern. The Secretariat is tasked with providing an annual management report summarising the progress reporting and flagging up key issues.

73% of Implementation Plan tasks were reported as on track and 83% were reported as having resources in place

In the first reporting round, in spring 2022, 73% of tasks were reported as on track and 83% of tasks were reported as having the necessary resources in place. Two tasks were reported as completed.

No issues were flagged as requiring the attention of the Coordination Group or Heads of Delegation.

The OSPAR Committees are continuing to develop new tasks to fulfil the NEAES

2030. Another 46 tasks were submitted to OSPAR 2022 for inclusion in the Plan. Since this is a living plan, new tasks will continue to be introduced, or completed ones removed as the Strategy progresses.

As the Plan progresses, the Commission will make an assessment of whether the tasks in place are sufficient to deliver the objectives in the NEAES 2030, or whether additional efforts are required.

A snapshot of the 2022 Plan is available on the [OSPAR website](#).

OSPAR Commission meeting in Copenhagen



Biodiversity and ecosystems

The [Biodiversity and Ecosystems Committee](#) (BDC) held its annual meeting from 4-8 April in Reykjavik, Iceland. The Committee meeting was convened by the new Chair Nina Schröder from Germany.

BDC has worked hard completing assessments on the status of biodiversity in the North-East Atlantic. 10 common indicator assessments on mobile species have been agreed assessing topics such as abundance and distribution of seals, and the rate of introduction of new non-indigenous species. BDC also agreed 16 status assessments of OSPAR listed [threatened and/or declining species and habitats](#), highlighting the continued poor status of species which have been identified as needing priority protective action. A further assessment on the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network presented progress made in creating an ecologically coherent and well managed network. These assessments provide new information about the status of biodiversity and will provide crucial input to the QSR 2023.



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An important component of work for BDC is the implementation of actions which have been agreed by OSPAR. There are over 50 OSPAR Recommendations that set out protective actions for OSPAR Listed threatened and/or declining species and habitats. BDC completed a large overview assessment of the work all Contracting Parties have undertaken to implement these actions over the past 6-year period. The overview assessment shows the good progress that Contracting Parties have made nationally in implementing actions, however, it underlines the need to further improve the work done regionally to implement collective actions where all Contracting Parties need to come together to protect species and habitats under threat.

In accordance with the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 operational objective S5.O1: By 2030 OSPAR will further develop its network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) to cover at least 30% of the OSPAR Maritime Area to ensure it is representative, ecologically coherent and effectively managed to achieve its conservation objectives, OSPAR called on its Contracting Parties to submit proposals for OECMs for the first time. This new concept highlighted area-based measures that are designed, for example, to protect killer whales and to protect sand-eels which are an important food-source for seabirds.

11% of the North-East Atlantic is now protected

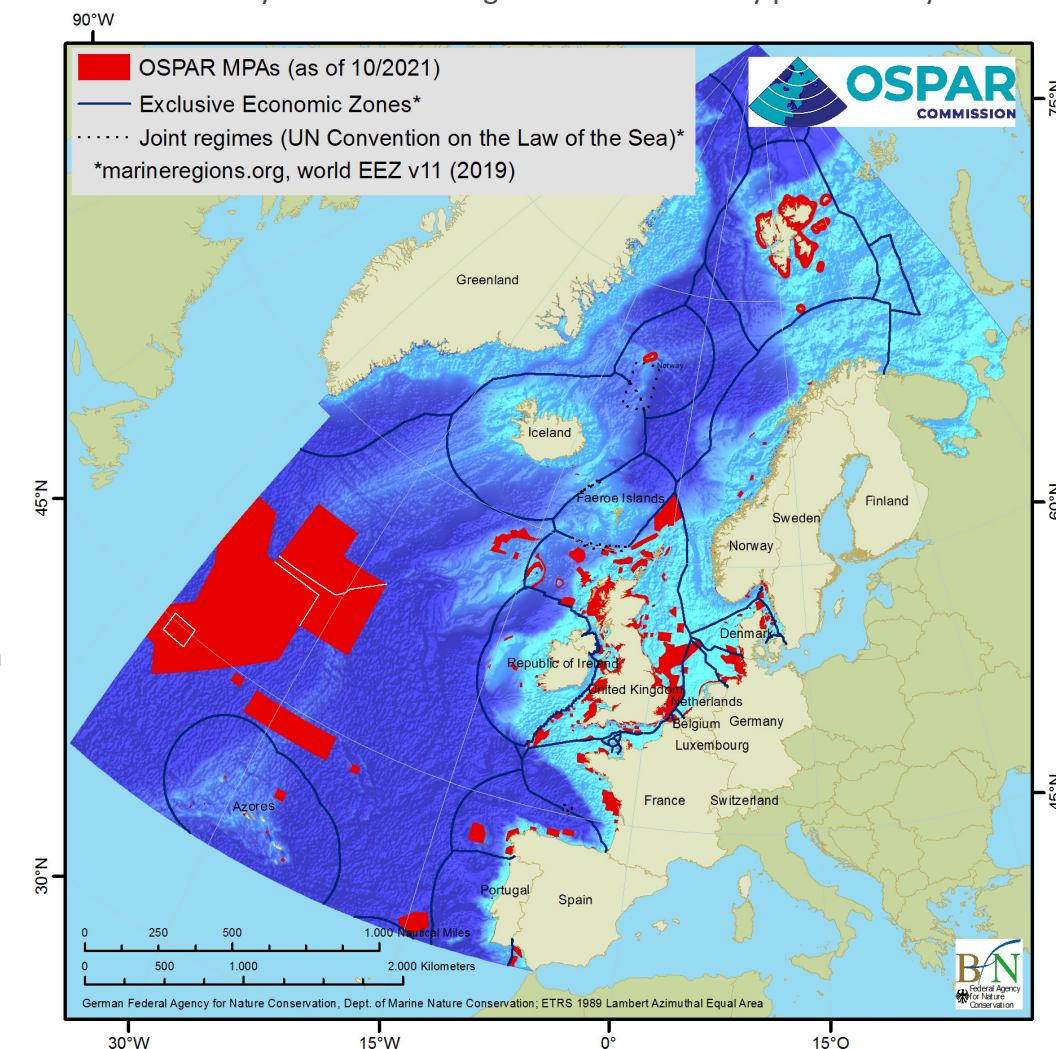
The [OSPAR network of Marine Protected Areas](#) now covers a total surface area of 1 490 552 km². This makes up 11% of the OSPAR Maritime Area. The OSPAR MPA network has therefore achieved and exceeded the Aichi Biodiversity target 11 of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

This significant achievement is a major milestone for the OSPAR Commission in its efforts to protect the North-East Atlantic marine environment. The progress made shows that global commitments can be achieved effectively through regional implementation of measures. The OSPAR Commission has now committed to raise its ambition level even further and as set out in the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030, has now committed to protecting 30% of the OSPAR Maritime Area through area-based measures.

The newly agreed 2021 MPA status report shows that the OSPAR MPA network is made up of 583 MPAs in total. Since the last Status Report in 2018, 87 MPAs with a surface area of more than 625 000 km² have been added to the OSPAR network of MPAs.

By far the largest new addition to the OSPAR MPA network has been the collective designation by all Contracting Parties of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA (NACES MPA). This MPA covers a total area of 595 196 km² and is located in the Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) in the high seas. The MPA was designated at the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2021 through [OSPAR Decision 2021/01](#), and the designation officially entered into force on 19 April 2022. The vast area of open ocean that constitutes the NACES MPA is characterised by special oceanographic conditions with currents and eddies that make the site an important feeding ground for millions of seabirds. Tracking studies of several seabird species, such as the OSPAR Listed thick-billed murre and black-legged kittiwake, and Audubons shearwater show that they fly across the Atlantic to this area to feed. Many seabird breeding colonies are already protected by marine and coastal protected areas, and the NACES MPA now provides important additional protection for the seabirds in their other life stages such as during winter and migration seasons by ensuring that the feeding ground remains available and in a natural condition.

OSPAR also agreed to consider whether to extend the designation of this large open ocean seabird protected site and has launched a roadmap ([OSPAR Agreement 2021-08](#)) to review whether the designation should also protect other features. OSPAR will scrutinise the scientific evidence available for the NACES MPA site with a view to seeing if it supports providing protection for species such as sharks and whales, as well as for the seafloor and its habitats.



OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas



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Environmental impacts of human activities

OSPAR's [Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee](#) (EIHA) met in Edinburgh in the United Kingdom on 21-25 March.

The Committee Chair, Mr John Mouat, was unfortunately taken ill with Covid on the eve of the meeting. Vice-chair Mr Jonas Pålsson stepped in at very short notice and steered the Committee through a very full agenda. Mairi McAllan MSP, Minister for Environment and Land Reform welcomed delegates and highlighted the importance of their work and wished them a successful meeting.

This was an important year for preparing assessments for the QSR 2023. Earlier meetings of EIHA had agreed indicators on marine litter and underwater noise. These included indicator assessments for the first time on ingestion of litter by sea turtles, pressure from continuous underwater noise and risk of impacts from impulsive noise. The focus of EIHA 2022 was on the more strategic “thematic” assessments on human activities, marine litter, and underwater noise. These assessments summarised information from the indicator and other assessments together with analysis of connected issues such as socio-economic drivers, the effectiveness of measures, impacts on ecosystem services and cumulative effects. These assessments will provide a comprehensive evidence base for OSPAR’s work over the next decade.

Following the adoption of NEAES 2030, EIHA agreed a second [Regional Action Plan on marine litter](#) and a number of other new tasks on issues such as developing a mechanism for environmental assessment of plans, projects and programmes with the potential to affect MPA in ABNJ; reviewing the OSPAR guidelines on dumping of wastes and other matter; developing a new action plan on underwater noise; and reviewing the risks from new, emerging and increasing pressures on the marine environment.

In order to support its work on the rapidly expanding renewables industry, EIHA agreed the terms of reference for a new correspondence group on offshore renewables energy development. The group, led by the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom held their inaugural meeting from 23 – 25 May 2022 and will focus initially on developing a regional sea approach to assessing cumulative effects on birds and developing regional guidance for Contracting Parties and developers.

The development of a Regional Action Plan on underwater noise will be a major undertaking for OSPAR. This will mark a progression towards the development of national and collective actions, supported by on-going monitoring and assessment. Following the adoption of its first assessment of continuous noise pressure, EIHA also agreed a joint ambient noise monitoring programme for the Greater North Sea, with the aim of producing common noise maps in future years.

More generally, EIHA continued to drive forward its work on a wide range of other human activities, such as deep seabed mining, pollution from shipping and munitions. This reflects not only the wide scope of the Committee’s responsibilities but also the tremendous commitment and professionalism of its members.

MSP for Environment and Land Reform, Mairi McAllan. With Vice-chair of EIHA, Jonas Pålsson (Sweden) and OSPAR Executive Secretary Dominic Pattinson

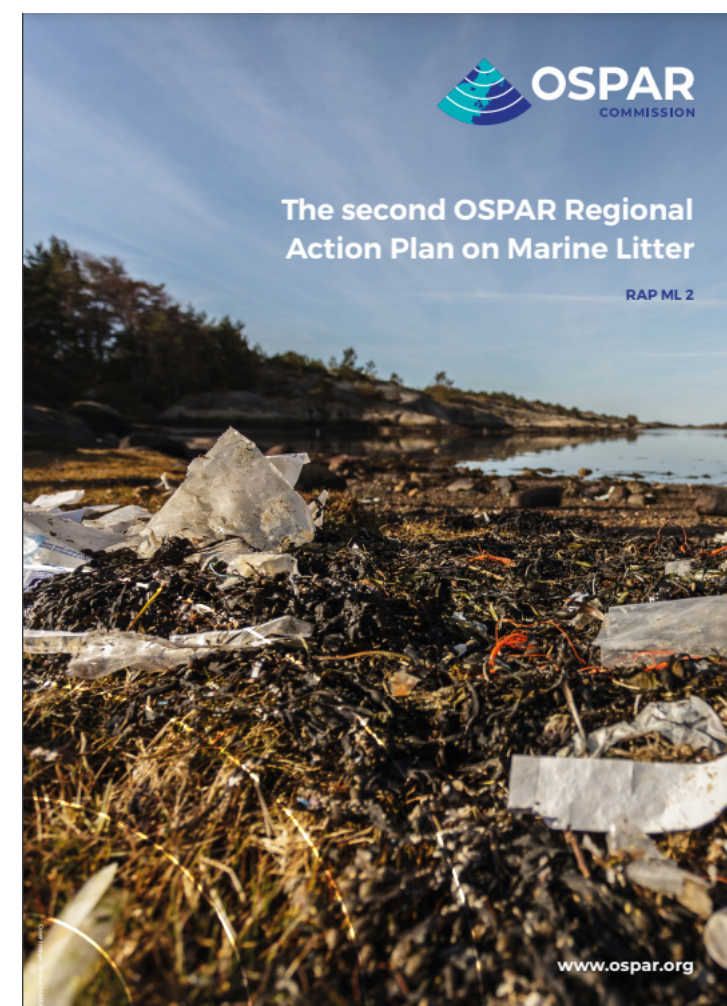


2nd regional action plan on marine litter

OSPAR launched its first [Regional Action Plan on marine litter](#) in 2014. The plan identified both national and collective actions to tackle sea- and land-based marine litter. Implementation of the Plan was completed in 2021 and its outputs and an evaluation report published.

While there are some positive signs that marine litter inputs in the North-East Atlantic are declining, we remain a long way short of the ambitious objectives and targets set in OSPAR’s NEAES 2030. For example, the Strategy includes a quantitative target to reduce the prevalence of the most commonly found single-use plastic items and of maritime-related plastic items on beaches by at least 50% by 2025 and at least 75% by 2030.

The 2022 meeting of EIHA therefore agreed a second Regional Action Plan to guide its work over the next decade and achieve further significant reductions in the prevalence of marine litter. The Plan presents 25 collective actions covering issues such as waste management, wastewater, riverine inputs, products and packaging, offshore industries, shipping, fishing and microplastics. The Plan will be adaptive and flexible so that, as and when necessary, new actions and national leads can be introduced. Progress will be reported into OSPAR’s Implementation Plan for the NEAES 2030..



Hazardous substances and eutrophication

OSPAR's [Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee](#) (HASEC) met in Madrid (Spain) from 28 March to 1 April and was chaired by Philip Axe (Sweden).

The work of HASEC has combined the numerous and diverse tasks of its subsidiary bodies, with those relating to the development of indicators and thematic assessments for the QSR 2023. HASEC embraced the NEAES 2030 with the development of eight concrete tasks, and eight other proposed tasks to be implemented from 2023, to achieve the strategic objectives related to a cleaner ocean and contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

HASEC's contributions to the QSR 2023 include two thematic assessments, eleven indicator assessments, one candidate indicator pilot assessment and four other assessments.

A new holistic approach to managing the OSPAR List of Chemicals for Priority Action and the List of Substances of Possible Concern has been defined. HASEC's subsidiary groups continued work on the set of environmental quality standard values intended to measure progress based on the best available science in each water body and readied the Fourth Common Procedure for publication. A study group on developing new guidelines for the monitoring of biological effects of contaminants in collaboration with HELCOM, was launched, and further cooperation saw plans to update the HARP-NUT guidelines in collaboration with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) marine chemistry working group.

HASEC agreed on the next steps regarding the treatment and use of sewage sludge and on biocide-free anti-fouling practices on recreational craft, including guidance on hull maintenance activities for commercial ships. Contracting Parties are preparing an updated analysis of the reporting round on [PARCOM Recommendation 94/6](#) on Best Environmental Practice (BEP) for the reduction of potentially toxic chemicals from aquaculture use and [PARCOM Recommendation 94/7](#) on the elaboration of national action plans and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) for the reduction of inputs to the environment of pesticides from agricultural use.

HASEC continues to collaborate with OSPAR Committees and more widely, thanks to the professionalism and dedication of all national experts involved.

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The Common Procedure

OSPAR describes eutrophication status in terms of 'Problem' and 'Non-problem' areas. The ultimate aim of the OSPAR strategy with regards to eutrophication is to achieve and maintain non-problem status in all parts of the OSPAR Maritime Area by 2030.

The [Common Procedure](#) (COMP) is the harmonised methodology developed and agreed by OSPAR Contracting Parties for assessing eutrophication in the North-East Atlantic, incorporating the best available scientific knowledge to interpret and assess eutrophication. It describes how, when and where the COMP will be applied in order to deliver an assessment.

The first application was applied nationally in 2002 with a joint report published in [2003](#). Subsequent applications resulted in joint reports in [2008](#) and [2017](#) which contributed to the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2010 and the Intermediate Assessment 2017. With the third application, OSPAR's eutrophication assessments covered the period from 2006 – 2014 and a long-term period with data back to 1990 for trend assessments. The fourth application will extend this, incorporating data from 2015 – 2019.

OSPAR 2022 agreed a more harmonised approach in the Fourth Application of the Common Procedure (COMP4), using new ecologically coherent assessment areas, and establishing robust threshold values. COMP4 will provide the basis for the assessment of eutrophication in the QSR 2023 and reflects the adaptive management of the ecosystem approach, incorporating a major revision in assessment areas and thresholds based on the best available scientific knowledge from EU funded projects such as JMP EUNOSAT¹ and the valuable work led by OSPAR's own Eutrophication Modelling Group in close collaboration with European research centres and the private sector.

¹Anon., ²⁰¹⁷, JMP EUNOSAT: Coherent eutrophication assessments for the North Sea, using satellite data, contract nr. ¹¹. 0661/2017/750678/SUBIENV.C² of DG-Environment part of the "European Maritime and Fisheries Fund" ^{3rd} call: "Implementation of the second cycle of the MSFD"

OSPAR's eutrophication experts



Offshore industry

OSPAR's [Offshore Industry Committee](#) (OIC) met online from 8-11 March 2022. Saravanan Marappan from the United Kingdom chaired the meeting and agreed to remain as Chair for one more meeting cycle. OIC recognised his diplomacy and professional way of leading the Committee for the last six years. Mr. Mikael Palme Malinovsky (Denmark) and Mr. Robert Dörband (Germany) were elected as vice-Chairs.

The meeting focused on the finalisation of OIC's products contributing to the QSR 2023. Norway had led intersessional work to prepare the OIC Overall Assessment and the Offshore Industry Thematic Assessment. Both deliverables covered offshore oil and gas activities including exploration, production, and decommissioning as well as carbon dioxide storage as an emerging offshore activity.

OIC also focused on its contribution to the NEAES 2030 and agreed a series of new tasks on issues such as further reducing discharges of oil in produced water and a risk-based approach for the management of produced water risk; phasing out plastic from materials placed at sea for the purpose of protecting marine infrastructure; phasing out discharges of plastic substances contained in offshore chemicals; and harmonising OSPAR's Harmonised Mandatory Control System (HMCS) with the EU's REACH regulations. To deliver the latter the intersessional correspondence group on REACH will continue its work and will be led by Denmark and the Netherlands with support from HASEC.

OIC received updates from the United Kingdom and the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) on developments in decommissioning technology for the removal of offshore installations. Tasks were agreed to review the categories of disused offshore installations under [OSPAR Decision 98/3](#), taking account of advancement of decommissioning technologies and scientific knowledge, and to develop a plan to promote and advance the development of decommissioning technologies. OIC welcomed an initiative to develop a harmonised Comparative Assessment methodology to support the assessment as required under Annex 2 of OSPAR Decision 98/3 as a new task.

An update on national projects on carbon dioxide storage were presented by the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom. OIC agreed a task to review the results of monitoring of carbon dioxide stored in geological formations and to evaluate the effectiveness of OSPAR measures. In the interim, OIC agreed on the additional reporting requirements for carbon dioxide projects to complement the annual reporting requirement as set out in [OSPAR Decision 2007/2](#).

Implementation reports of [OSPAR Recommendation 2006/3](#) on environmental goals for the discharge by the offshore industry of chemicals that are, or which contain, substances identified as candidates for substitution (as amended by OSPAR Recommendation 2019/2) were presented at OIC 2022 together with the 2020 data report on Discharges, Spills and Emissions from oil and gas installations.



Outgoing Chair of OIC, Saravanan Marappan (United Kingdom)

Disposal of disused offshore installations

The dumping, and leaving wholly or partly in place, of disused offshore installations is prohibited within the OSPAR Maritime Area under [OSPAR Decision 98/3](#) on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations. However, following an assessment, the competent authority of the relevant Contracting Party may give permission to an operator to leave installations or parts of installations in place in certain cases. The assessment needs to be undertaken in accordance with Annex 2 of the Decision and show that there are significant reasons why the proposal for disposal at sea is preferable to reuse or recycling or final disposal on land.

At the 2019 OIC meeting Germany proposed to work on a joint comparative assessment methodology for application across the OSPAR Maritime Area in compliance with OSPAR Decision 98/3 and suggested the development of an OSPAR guidance document that would guarantee a balanced and robust procedure. OIC 2019 agreed to have an informal meeting to discuss the proposal.

The first special consultative meeting was held on 18 October 2019 in London in relation to the UK's intention to issue a permit to leave in-situ the footings of the Brent Alpha steel jacket and each of the gravity based concrete installations of Brent Bravo, Brent Charlie and Brent Delta in accordance with OSPAR Decision 98/3. The meeting concluded that the comparative assessment was a useful decision support tool to assist in the selection of a final recommended option, although there remained different views on the methodology. The meeting acknowledged that the planned informal OIC meeting for December 2019 was considered as a first step to look further into a methodology for Comparative Assessments and bring transparency to the implementation of OSPAR Decision 98/3.



An informal meeting to discuss Comparative Evaluation of Decommissioning Options in support of Derogation Proposals was held on 10-11 December 2019 in Aberdeen, United Kingdom. Several Contracting Parties and an Observer Organisation supported having a common methodology for the Comparative Assessment with a broad perspective that could lead to the appropriate considerations for operators and regulators. The meeting recognised that the United Kingdom and Norway were the key Contracting Parties as most installations which might be candidates for future derogation processes were in their respective waters and welcomed their decision to review their national guidelines in the light of the discussions held at the meeting.

At the second special consultative meeting held on 5 November 2021 in London in relation to the United Kingdom's intention to issue a permit to leave in-situ the footings of the Brae Bravo steel jacket in accordance with OSPAR Decision 98/3, the Chair concluded that OSPAR needed to agree in a timely fashion on a harmonised approach for the Comparative Assessment methodology. The process initiated to agree a common OSPAR approach had not provided sufficient reassurance to Contracting Parties.

A group of OSPAR Heads of Delegations together with experts from the Offshore Industry Committee worked intersessionally to propose a task on developing a harmonised Comparative Assessment methodology to support the assessment as required under Annex 2 of OSPAR Decision 98/3. The first meeting of OSPAR's Heads of Delegations in 2022 agreed to include the proposed task in the Implementation plan of the NEAES 2030. The task, led by Germany and the Netherlands, sets 2024 as the deadline to agree on the harmonised methodology, which will be relevant in the OSPAR Maritime Area as it is anticipated a number of installations will be decommissioned in the next two decades.

Radioactive substances

OSPAR's [Radioactive Substances Committee](#) (RSC) met in February and in April of 2022. The annual meeting was held online from 8 – 10 February 2022 and an extraordinary meeting RSC(2) to cover remaining agenda issues was held in Brussels at the kind invitation of the European Commission from 20 – 21 April 2022.

The meetings were chaired by Justin Gwynn (Norway), who stood down as Chair after chairing RSC for the last 12 years. RSC thanked him for his dedication and for his outstanding contribution to furthering the work of RSC. The outgoing Chair was glad to leave some new challenges under the new Strategy for the incoming Chair, Adam Stackhouse (United Kingdom) and vice-Chairs, Carol Robinson (Norway) and Anki Hagg (Sweden).

The main focus of the online meeting was to agree on the deliverables from RSC contributing to the QSR 2023. The [5th Periodic Evaluation of Progress Towards the Objective of the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy 2010-2020](#) (5PE) was finalised after two years of dedicated work to assess discharges, environmental concentrations and the radiological impacts on man and biota for data reported to OSPAR over the period from 1995 to 2018. In addition, RSC agreed the contents of the Radioactive Substances Thematic Assessment, which will be the main product from RSC for inclusion in the QSR 2023 and identifies relevant socio-economic drivers and human activities that culminate in the introduction of radionuclides to the marine environment and the resulting environmental concentrations of radionuclides and their associated radiological impacts. From an understanding of the state of the environment with regard to radioactive substances, the potential for any impact on ecosystem services was then reviewed.

RSC prepared the 2020 annual report and assessment on discharges from the nuclear sector and the non-nuclear sector as well as the 2020 annual data for environmental concentrations of radionuclides in the marine environment. New co-convenors of the Expert Assessment Panel were appointed to lead the work on the discharges for the nuclear and non-nuclear sectors as well as for the reporting of environmental concentration data.

RSC(2) was held in Brussels and was an opportunity to meet face to face after nearly two years of online

meetings and to discuss and develop tasks under the operational objectives related to radioactive substances of the NEAES 2030. Discussions on task planning considered the timeline up to 2030 and the need to coordinate work on related tasks and objectives. RSC agreed on the Terms of Reference for an Intersessional Correspondence Group to consider the assessment methodologies required to evaluate progress against NEAES 2030.

Outgoing Chair of RSC, Justin Gwynn (Norway)



Fifth Periodic Evaluation

RSC has been working for the last two meeting cycles on the preparation of the [5th Periodic Evaluation of Progress Towards the Objective of the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy 2010-2020](#) (5PE) which is the culmination of more than two decades of cooperation and work by Contracting Parties on the issue of Radioactive Substances under OSPAR.

The 5PE is a comprehensive evaluation that assesses authorised discharges from the nuclear and non-nuclear sectors and environmental concentrations of radionuclides in the OSPAR Maritime Area as well as the radiological consequences of those concentrations.

This latest evaluation builds upon the data and conclusions of the previous periodic evaluations and is based on data reported to OSPAR over the period from 1995 to 2018.

The report describes the main sources of discharges of radioactive substances from both the nuclear and non-nuclear sectors, how the discharge data is reported and the measures that Contracting Parties have implemented to reduce discharges. For environmental concentrations, an overview is given of the monitoring carried out by Contracting Parties and the type of data reported. The report also gives a detailed description of the assessments carried out for both discharges and environmental concentrations as well as the approaches used to determine the radiological impact on humans and non-human biota from environmental concentrations and additional concentrations of naturally occurring radionuclides arising from discharges of produced water from the oil and gas sub-sector.

The 5PE concludes that OSPAR Contracting Parties have successfully fulfilled the objectives of the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy (RSS) under NEAES 2010-2020. Progressive and substantial reductions have been achieved in discharges from the nuclear sector. Discharges from the non-nuclear oil and gas sub-sector have mostly remained unchanged but such discharges are not yet amenable to reduction where the option of re-injection is not possible. Significant progress has been made towards fulfilling the ultimate aim of the Radioactive Substances Strategy 2010-2020 of "concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring radioactive substances and close to zero for artificial radioactive substances". Environmental concentrations of indicator radionuclides for the nuclear sector are close to or lower than historic levels. Environmental concentrations of indicator radionuclides for the nuclear sector and modelled additional concentrations of indicator radionuclides for the non-nuclear oil and gas sub-sector would not result in any significant radiological impact to humans or the marine environment.

As preventing pollution of the Maritime Area is an ongoing task to deliver the OSPAR Convention, new operational objectives for radioactive substances under the NEAES 2030 have been agreed.

Evidence of OSPAR's Contracting Parties' success in preventing pollution of the OSPAR Maritime Area by ionising radiation is presented in our latest evaluation

Data

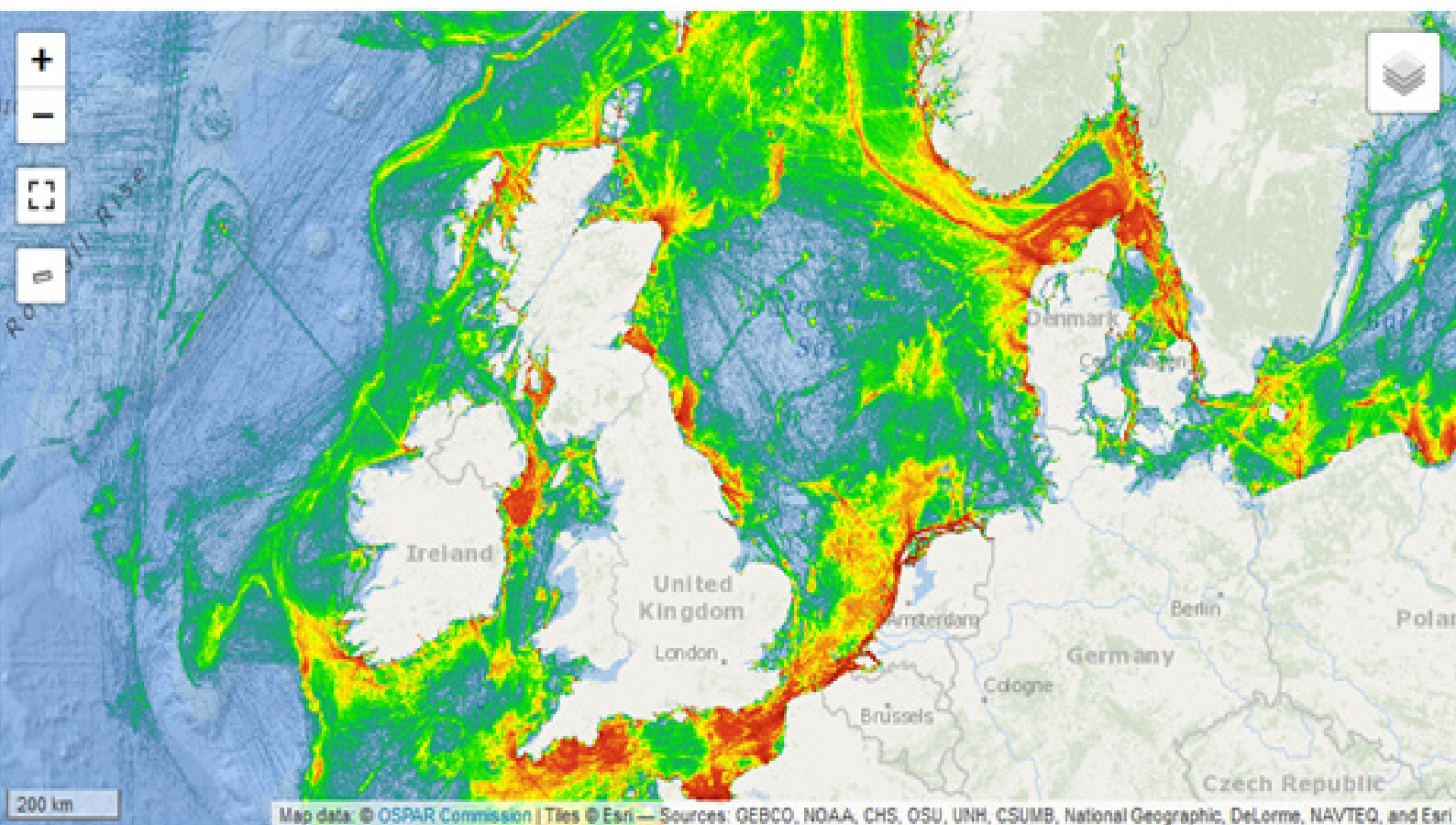
Following last year's updates to the software underpinning the [OSPAR Data and Information Management System](#) (ODIMS), further upgrades have been made to ODIMS and the [OSPAR Assessment Portal](#) (OAP). These updates are centred around improving navigation and a user's ability to easily find what they are looking for. In ODIMS, there is a much-improved search function with on-the-fly keyword filtering implemented. The same search interface has been added to OAP, creating a consistent user experience and presentational style. To support the search function, there have been some back-end updates to OAP to restructure the metadata that is added to each assessment submission. This information directly underpins the search function as well as ensuring a more complete record of assessment information

Alongside the search function are filters, provided in the margin of OAP, to allow more precise focusing of results. This tool will really come into its own as the amount of content in OAP ramps up following delivery of the upcoming QSR 2023.

The latest round of updates will directly support the presentation of the QSR 2023; this is the first time the QSR will be primarily an online delivery and so the way that all the different types of user can access the information, and supporting data for each assessment, is key. The interactive maps and charting functions will come into their own, creating an immersive environment to explore the findings of the QSR 2023 and make it easily accessible to all.

There are some other tweaks that have been made to OAP, improvements in accessibility and presentation, but we'll keep that information under our hat until the presentation of the QSR... we don't want to ruin the surprise!

<https://oap.ospar.org/en/>



Embedded map example taken from <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/quality-status-reports/qsr-2023/other-assessments/fisheries/>

OSPAR has a new group on offshore renewables energy development which will focus initially on assessing cumulative effects on birds



Engagement with United Nations bodies

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

The Secretariat has continued to contribute to the initiative of the Espoo Convention to identify synergies and possible future cooperation activities with interested Regional Seas Conventions and bodies with respect to strategic environmental assessment and transboundary environmental impact assessment.

United Nations Environment Programme

The Secretariat attended the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre event on the effectiveness of Protected Areas (PAs) and OECMs. The workshop aimed to increase the understanding of the indicators proposed in the monitoring framework of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) relating to PAs and OECMs.

The Secretariat continues to engage with UNEP's Regional Seas team and has contributed to the following reports:

- a. [Contributions of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to a Healthy Ocean](#);
- b. (draft) Report on harmonizing the regional seas programmes national reporting and the CBD National Reporting (NBSAP); and
- c. The Ecosystem Approach: Towards a practical application across Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Secretariat followed the development of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has written a number of documents and reports that have contributed to the GBF process, and the Secretariat has provided input to these reports.

The Executive Secretary made a presentation on OSPAR's work on underwater noise at an online event to mark the launch of the CBD technical series report on underwater noise.

Regional Seas Conventions

Regional seas marine litter meeting

The Secretariat joined a meeting of the European Regional Seas Conventions and the EU to discuss areas of joint interest with regards to marine litter and shared information on the state of progress in producing updated regional action plans. The Secretariat also participated in the preparations for the MARLICE conference in Seville held back-to-back with a meeting of ICG-ML including a segment on cooperation between Regional Seas Conventions in supporting the envisaged new legally binding international instrument on plastic pollution.

Global meeting of the Regional Seas Programme

The Executive Secretary attended the Twenty-second Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Programme meeting, hosted by the Nairobi Convention Secretariat in the Seychelles. The focus of the meeting was on delivery of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) 2022-2025 and its implementation. The Executive Secretary presented developments in OSPAR's work and how, through the NEAES 2030, OSPAR was contributing to the wider work of the Regional Seas Conventions' work. The meeting also discussed the role Regional Seas Conventions could play in the implementation of the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution of ending plastic pollution, sustainable nitrogen management and sound management of chemicals and waste.

Barcelona Convention

The Secretariat participated in meetings and discussions organised by the Union for the Mediterranean at the invitation of France, and by the Blue Italian Growth Technology Cluster to further discuss the role of the sustainable blue economy towards a clean and healthy ocean, strategic axes in cross-border areas and the role of the private sector (maritime clusters).



Engagement with other international organisations

Arctic Council

The Secretariat continued the collaboration with the Working Group of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) on the assessment of eutrophication, hazardous substances, their biological effects, and other indicators for clean seas. The work supports indicators on:

- Hazardous substance (e.g., metals, POPs; etc.) levels and biological effects;
- Eutrophication - nutrients, seasonal nutrition, chlorophyll, and oxygen levels;
- Microbiology and algal toxins;
- Marine litter - microplastics, shore litter, seabed litter;
- Noise - continuous noise, impulsive noise.

Also under AMAP, RSC prepared a text as part of the Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials chapter of the AMAP 2023 Arctic report.

HELCOM

The OSPAR and HELCOM hazardous substances and eutrophication groups continued their collaboration at OSPAR's Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME) meeting held at ICES in Copenhagen. Collaboration with PAME on the optimisation of hazardous substances tools, sharing methodologies, and jointly advancing both technical and methodological developments of OSPAR Hazardous Substances Assessment Tool were agreed.

The OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES joint working group on seabirds agreed a new 3-year work programme up until 2023.

A new OSPAR/HELCOM expert working group on NIS was established with a 3-year work programme. As an early output, the group prepared a proposal which was agreed by BDC 2022 to use the AquaNIS database as a centralised data repository for OSPAR which would align with HELCOM approaches and support synergistic assessments in the future.

Bonn Agreement

The Secretariat updated the related OSPAR committees and subsidiary bodies on the main outcomes of the Bonn Agreement in 2021. Relevant issues were considered by HASEC, OIC and OSPAR's North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors. It was agreed that the Bonn Agreement would be asked to contribute to one of OIC's tasks in relation to produced water discharges from offshore installations.

Collective arrangement

OSPAR 2021 adopted Decision 2021/01 on the designation of the NACES MPA. The Decision came into effect 19 April 2022 and it was agreed that it would be appropriate for OSPAR 2022 to update Agreement 2014-09 Annex 1b to identify this new area under the collective arrangement.

North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

OSPAR attended the 40th Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). The Executive Secretary gave an opening statement highlighting those OSPAR Ministerial meeting deliverables of most relevance to NEAFC. This included the Cascais Declaration which gave a clear signal from OSPAR Ministers on the need to intensify efforts to cooperate with other competent organisations through the collective arrangement as the appropriate platform to address the management of human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Inter-Secretariat meeting between Regional Agreement Secretariats, the European Commission and the European Maritime Safety Agency

The 18th Inter-Secretariat meeting between Regional Agreement Secretariats, the European Commission and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) exchanged information and best practices in marine pollution prevention, preparedness and response across the European regional seas. The OSPAR Secretariat referred to the outcome of its 2021 Ministerial meeting and the adoption of the NEAES 2030 and its regional action plan on marine litter.

OSPAR participation at international events

European Union

The Secretariat participated in the launch conference of the Copernicus programme organised in the context of the French Presidency of the European Council by the European Commission and subcontracted service providers. The Secretariat participated in one of the discussion sessions together with representatives of HELCOM and the Barcelona Convention on the reporting of marine environmental data and information, and how Copernicus data benefits this process.

The Secretariat attended the meeting of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Core group on significant oil spills where Regional Seas Conventions were informed of the latest environmental policy developments regarding the Zero Pollution Action Plan and the MSFD review process with respect to the MSFD D8+D9 Contaminants progress update and work plan.

The Secretariat also attended the Expert Group on Strategic Coordination for the MSFD (MSCG) where the state of play in the implementation of the Directive was discussed.

Twenty-second Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Programme meeting attended by Dominic Pattinson

MEDREGION

The Secretariat attended the MEDREGION stakeholder workshop "Towards consistent assessment of benthic habitat and effective measures to reduce physical disturbance to the seafloor in the Mediterranean Sea". MEDREGION supports EU Member States in the Mediterranean in the implementation of the MSFD, decision making in relation to good environmental status and the programme of measures, and contributions to strengthen regional cooperation.

2021 Offshore Decommissioning Conference

OSPAR was invited to the Conference held in St. Andrews, Scotland, to present OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the disposal of disused offshore installations and referred to the assessments required, the consultation procedure and the permit conditions for potential derogations in the OSPAR Maritime Area.

Together with other stakeholders, OSPAR participated in the panel of experts chaired by the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP) which discussed the consideration of science and technology in decommissioning policies.



OSPAR Other Agreements agreed in 2022

Cross cutting

Agreement 2000-14: Staff Regulations. Update

Agreement 2022-02: Terms of Reference for the Coordination Group and the Committees (replaces Agreement 2011-04)

Agreement 2013-02: Rules of Procedure. Update (data release arrangements (Annex 3))

Agreement 2014-02: Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme – update with the outcome of 2022 Committee meetings, including revision to the Human Activities List

Agreement 2014-09: Collective Arrangement. Revision

Agreement 2016-01: Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme. Updates to Appendices: BE1 (Marine Litter), BE7 (Dumping), E2 (direct and indirect Eutrophication effects), BB11 (PH2), BB12 (PH3) and BB13 (NIS).

Agreement 2022-01: Roadmap to support OSPAR’s objectives in the Arctic

Biodiversity and ecosystems

Agreement 2016-09: CEMP Guidelines for marine bird abundance (B1). Update

Agreement 2016-10: CEMP Guidelines for marine bird breeding success (B3). Update

Agreement 2016-11: CEMP Guidelines for seal abundance and distribution (M3). Update

Agreement 2016-12: CEMP Guidelines for grey seal pup production (M5). Update

Agreement 2018-09: CEMP Guidelines for abundance and distribution of cetaceans (M4). Update

Agreement 2021-08: Roadmap for further development of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area. Revision

Agreement 2022-03: CEMP Guidelines for marine mammal bycatch (M6)

Agreement 2018-05: Combined CEMP Guidelines for FC2, FC3, FW4. Update

Agreement 2022-04: CEMP Guidelines for sensitive fish species (FC1).

Agreement 2018-04: CEMP Guidelines for Changes to non-indigenous species communities (NIS3). Update

Environmental impacts of human activities

Agreement 2022-05: 2nd Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter.

Agreement 2022-06: Joint ambient noise monitoring programme for the North Sea

Hazardous Substances and eutrophication

¹Agreement 2022-07: Common Procedure for the Identification of the Eutrophication Status of the OSPAR Maritime Area. Revision of Agreement 2013-08, and replaces Agreements 1997-11, 2002-20, 2005-3

Offshore industry

Agreement 2012-08. Data collection format for annual report. Update

Radioactive substances

Agreement 2016-07 on a Methodology for Deriving Environmental Assessment Criteria. Update

¹Subject to agreement in written procedure

OSPAR publications 2022

OSPAR publications are prepared by committees and then agreed for publication at the annual meeting of the OSPAR Commission. These include background documents, scoping studies, and implementation reports. The list also includes assessments which are made available through [OSPAR’s Assessment Portal](#) so that embedded, interactive maps and charts can be used. All of these are discoverable through the [OSPAR website](#).

Data to be published via the OSPAR Data and Information Management System

Biodiversity Committee

OECD

Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee

Encounters with Conventional and Chemical Munitions (2020 data)

Dumping and Placement of Wastes and Other Matters at Sea (2020 data)

Fishing for Litter (2020 data)

Impulsive Underwater Noise (2020 data)

Seabed Litter (2020 data)

Plastic Particles in Fulmar Stomachs (2020 data)

Offshore Renewable Energy Developments (2020 data)

Marine Litter Beach Monitoring Data (2020 data)

Encounters with Conventional and Chemical Munitions (2020 data)

Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee

Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges word reports and data files (2020 data)

Offshore Industry Committee

Discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil and gas installations (2020 data)

Amended version of the Inventory of Offshore Installations

Radioactive Substances Committee

Nuclear discharges (2020 data)

Non-nuclear sectors (2020 data)

Environmental concentrations (2020 data)

Our vision is a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic Ocean, which is productive, used sustainably and resilient to climate change and ocean acidification.



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