

THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

OSPAR's QUALITY STATUS REPORT 2023 BRIEFING NOTE SERIES

The environmental pressures from the offshore industry during exploration, production and decommissioning include the discharge of produced water, oil, chemicals, drilling muds and cuttings, the physical impact from the placement of installations and pipelines, noise from seismic surveys and drilling, light emitted from the installations, and atmospheric emissions.

These pressures are greatest in the Greater North Sea, followed by the Arctic Waters and Celtic Seas Regions. In the Bay of Biscay, Iberian Coast and Wider Atlantic Regions, there are fewer installations, and the pressures are considered to be relatively low.

OSPAR has put in place a significant number of measures aimed at reducing the discharges from the offshore industry within the OSPAR area thus reducing their impacts on the marine environment.

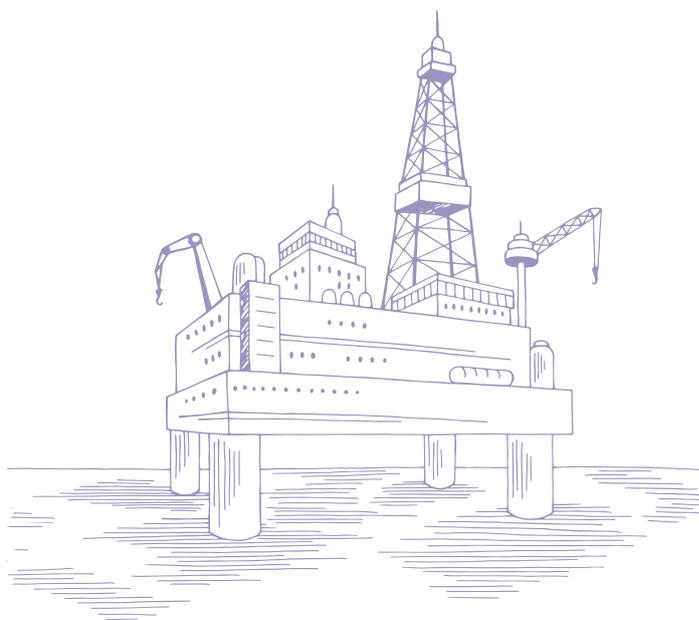
Studies have been undertaken by Contracting Parties examining the potential impacts, including historical cuttings piles, produced water, drilling fluids and chemicals. There has been a measurable decrease in emissions and discharges since QSR 2010. Activities that were once widespread, such as the discharge of oil-based fluids, have ceased and the level of contamination has decreased over most of the OSPAR area. A lessening of existing impacts has been seen, for example a reduction in the amount of dispersed oil discharged in produced water and the phase

out and reduction of discharges of hazardous offshore chemicals. A risk-based approach to the management of produced water discharges has also been introduced.

Contracting Parties have also fully implemented the ban on dumping or leaving in place disused offshore installations. Since 1998, approximately 170 installations have been decommissioned and 10 installations granted derogations from the ban.

Monitoring and reporting indicate that these OSPAR measures have significantly improved the quality of the OSPAR Maritime Area as a whole, particularly in the North Sea, where there are high levels of oil and gas activity.

OSPAR will continue its work in accordance with the relevant operational objectives set out in the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 (NEAES 2030).



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