



OSPAR Recommendation 2021/04 on furthering the protection and conservation of Haploops habitat in Region II of the OSPAR maritime area

Preamble

RECALLING Article 2(1) of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic ('the OSPAR Convention');

RECALLING Annex V to the OSPAR Convention on the protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area, and in particular its Article 3(1)(b)(ii), which makes it a duty of the OSPAR Commission to develop means, consistent with international law, for instituting protective, conservation, restorative or precautionary measures related to specific areas or sites or related to specific species or habitats; and its Article 3(1)(b)(iv), which aims for the application of an integrated ecosystem approach, subject to Article 4;

RECALLING Article 4(1) of Annex V, which provides that in accordance with the penultimate recital of the OSPAR Convention, no programme or measure concerning a question relating to the management of fisheries shall be adopted under that Annex, while recognising that where the OSPAR Commission considers that action is desirable in relation to such a question, it shall draw that question to the attention of the authority or international body competent for that question;

RECALLING OSPAR Recommendation 2003/03 as amended by OSPAR Recommendation 2010/02, that calls upon Contracting Parties to report to the OSPAR Commission sites selected for inclusion as components of the OSPAR network of marine protected areas and develop appropriate management plans and measures;

RECALLING OSPAR Recommendation 2010/05 on assessments of environmental impact in relation to threatened and/or declining species and habitats;

RECALLING the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (OSPAR Agreement 2008-06), in which Haploops habitat is listed as a habitat occurring in OSPAR Regions II and IV and categorised as a habitat under threat and/or in decline in the Kattegat area of OSPAR Region II;

RECALLING the Statement on the Common Understanding of the Recommendations on Species and Habitats (OSPAR Agreement 2013-13);

NOTING the Case Report (OSPAR publication 2021/785), the respective Background Document for this habitat (OSPAR publication 2021/786) and the scientific references therein;

NOTING that, where appropriate, the programmes and measures of this Recommendation will support the regional implementation of EU Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) and corresponding legislation of other Contracting Parties;

NOTING that the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) has red listed “Baltic aphotic muddy sediment dominated by Haploops spp.” and adopted recommendation 40/1 on 07 March 2019 which applies to this habitat.

The Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic RECOMMEND:

1. Definitions

For the purpose of this Recommendation:

“*Haploops habitat*” means muddy sediment dominated by epibenthic crustacea (Haploops species *H. tenuis* and *H. tubicola*), covering at least 10% of the seabed and more than other perennial attached erect groups. Out of the epibenthic crustacea, Haploops spp. constitute at least 50% of the biomass. This habitat is further described in OSPAR Agreement 2008-07;

“*marine protected area*” means an area within the maritime area for which protective, conservation, restorative or precautionary measures, consistent with international law, have been instituted for the purpose of protecting and conserving species, habitats, ecosystems or ecological processes of the marine environment;

“*OSPAR habitat mapping database*” means the database compiled by OSPAR of existing data from Contracting Parties on the distribution of habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (OSPAR Agreement 2008-06).

2. Purpose and scope

2.1 The purpose of this Recommendation is to strengthen the protection of Haploops habitat as a threatened and/or declining habitat in order to recover the habitat, to improve its status and to ensure it is effectively conserved in the Kattegat in Region II of the OSPAR maritime area.

3. Programmes and measures

3.1 Individually, Contracting Parties bordering the Kattegat in Region II should consider:

- a. introducing national legislation to protect Haploops habitat;
- b. reporting any existing and new data on the distribution, quality and extent of Haploops habitat to OSPAR;
- c. designating marine protected areas to protect haploops habitat as part of the OSPAR network;
- d. adopting measures to remove or avoid physical disturbance or loss of Haploops habitat;
- e. adopting measures to minimise the potential effects of eutrophication or hazardous substances on Haploops habitat;
- f. raising public awareness of the ecological value of Haploops habitat;
- g. providing information to planning authorities, developers, and marine industries on the important functions of Haploops habitat and the pressures and activities that can prevent recovery.

3.2 Acting collectively within the framework of the OSPAR Commission, with the aim of promoting an ecosystem-based approach, Contracting Parties should:

- a. improve the OSPAR habitat mapping database in relation to Haploops habitat by reporting relevant records;

- b. communicate the current knowledge base on Haploops habitat to stakeholders and other competent international authorities;
- c. work collaboratively with HELCOM to ensure coherent management and research, and to facilitate knowledge/information exchange.

4. Entry into force

4.1 This Recommendation has effect from 1 October 2021.

5. Implementation reports

5.1 Contracting Parties should report by 31 December 2025 on the implementation of this Recommendation to the OSPAR Commission, and every six years thereafter.

5.2 When reporting on implementation, the format as set out in Appendix 1 should be used as far as possible.

Format for implementation reports concerning OSPAR Recommendation 2021/4 on furthering the protection and conservation of Haploops habitat in Region II of the OSPAR maritime area

(Note: In accordance with section 5 of the Recommendation, this format should be used as far as possible in implementation reports)

I. Implementation Report on Compliance

Country:

Reservation applies: yes/no

Is this measure applicable in your country? yes/no

If not applicable, then state why not.

II. Means of Implementation:

By legislation yes/no

By administrative action yes/no

By negotiated agreement yes/no

Please provide information on:

- a. specific measures taken to give effect to this measure;
- b. any special difficulties encountered, such as practical or legal problems, in the implementation of this measure;
- c. any reasons for not having fully implemented this measure should be spelt out clearly and plans for full implementation should be reported.