



# OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 - Progress Report

2023

[www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org)



**OSPAR**  
COMMISSION

# Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. What has OSPAR done to implement the objectives of the NEAES 2030?	5
3. What has OSPAR done to monitor and assess the marine environment?	8
4. What has OSPAR done to demonstrate global leadership?	10
5. The way forward	11

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

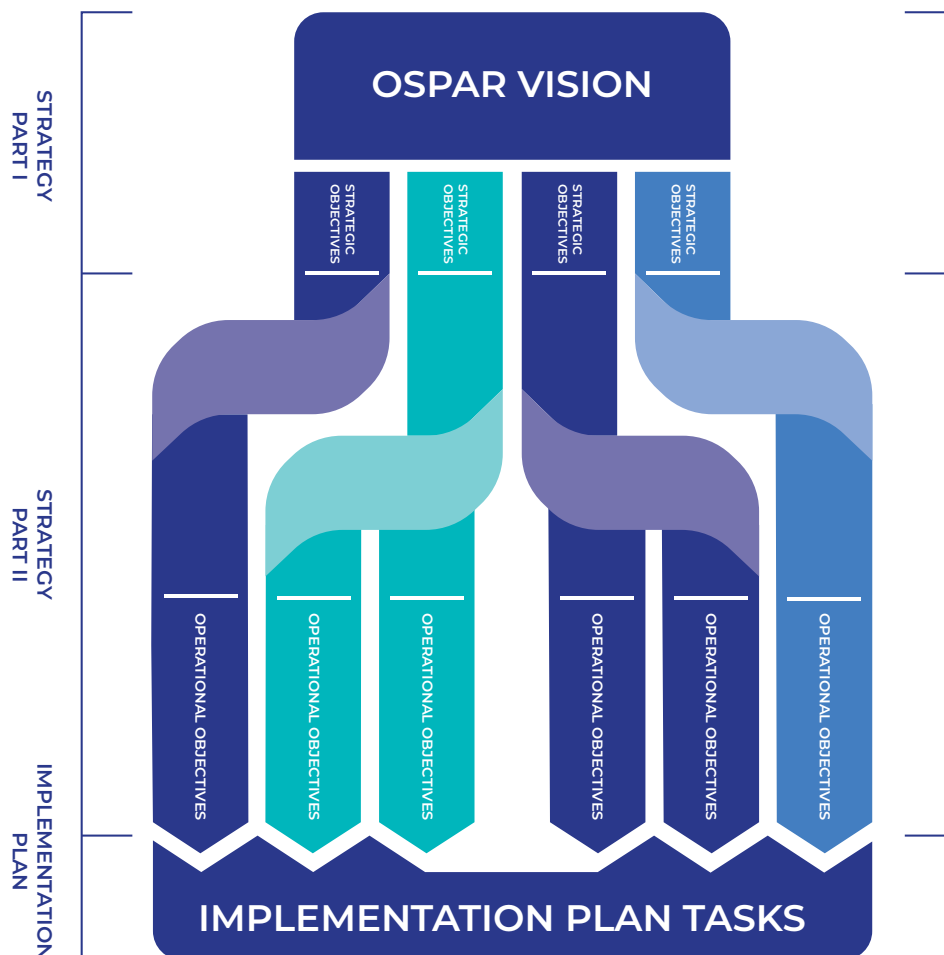


Figure 1. The Strategy has three tiers: our vision and strategic objectives in Part 1, operational objectives in Part 2, all underpinned by a comprehensive implementation plan that sets out the specific tasks needed to deliver the strategic and operational objectives.

# Executive Summary

This is OSPAR’s first report to Ministers on progress in the implementation of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2030.

Substantial progress has been made in turning the Strategy’s strategic and operational objectives into specific actions and in adapting our ways of working to meet new challenges. The necessary management tools have been put into place to enable the OSPAR Commission to track the implementation of the NEAES and report back to Ministers and to all our stakeholders.

A significant milestone has been reached this year with the publication of the Quality Status Report (QSR) 2023 – this is our most authoritative assessment yet of the state of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. While there are some positive indications, many of the findings of the QSR, most notably on the status of marine species and habitats are very concerning. This only reinforces the importance of implementing the present Strategy and of being prepared to adjust and agree new actions in the light of the QSR.

This short report summarises the progress we have made in the first two years of the Strategy and sets out our priorities up until 2025.

# Récapitulatif

Ceci est le premier rapport d’avancement d’OSPAR sur la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie pour le milieu marin de l’Atlantique du Nord-Est (NEAES) 2030 destiné aux Ministres.

Des progrès substantiels ont été réalisés pour transformer les objectifs stratégiques et opérationnels en actions spécifiques et pour adapter nos méthodes de travail afin de répondre aux nouveaux défis. Les outils de gestion nécessaires ont été mis en place pour permettre à la Commission OSPAR de suivre la mise en œuvre de la NEAES et d’en rendre compte aux Ministres et à toutes les parties prenantes.

Une étape importante a été franchie cette année avec la publication du Bilan de Santé (QSR) 2023 - il s’agit de notre évaluation la plus fiable à ce jour de l’état du milieu marin de l’Atlantique du Nord-Est. Bien qu’il y ait quelques indications positives, de nombreuses conclusions du QSR, notamment en ce qui concerne l’état des espèces et des habitats marins, sont très préoccupantes. Ceci ne fait que renforcer l’importance de la mise en œuvre de la NEAES 2030, et souligne l’importance d’être prêt à l’ajuster et à adopter de nouvelles actions à la lumière des conclusions du QSR.

Ce bref rapport résume les progrès réalisés au cours des deux premières années de la NEAES 2030 et fait état de nos priorités jusqu’en 2025.

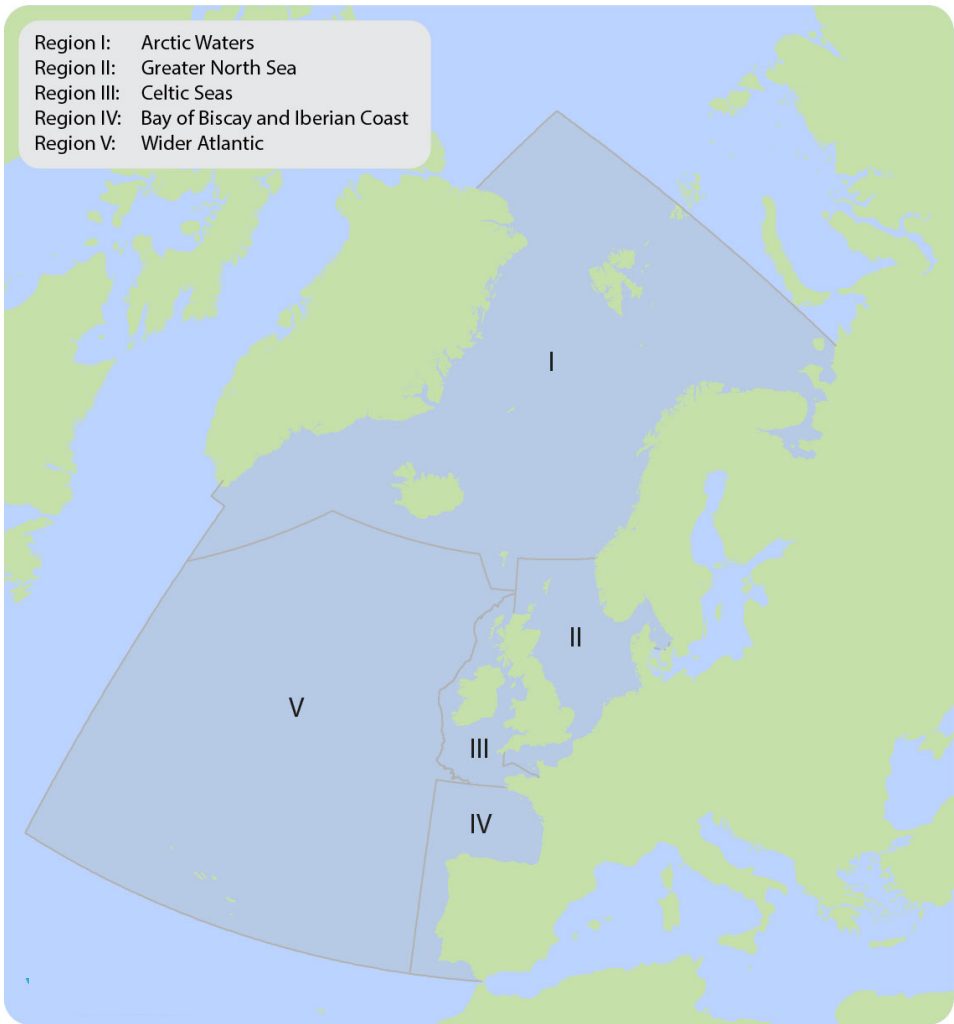


Figure 2: The OSPAR Maritime Area



# 1. Introduction

OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 (NEAES 2030) was adopted by all Contracting Parties at the OSPAR Ministerial meeting on 1 October 2021 in Cascais, Portugal. Ministers of the OSPAR Contracting Parties and the European Union's Commissioner also agreed the Cascais Declaration which included the following commitment:

*We reconfirm that OSPAR will continue to dedicate its collaborative force to the agreed vision and common objectives of our North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. To maintain momentum and to ensure that we reach our goals we ask the OSPAR Commission to report progress on the implementation of the Strategy every 2 years and agree to meet again within 5 years to review implementation and adjust the Strategy, if necessary, in light of the Quality Status Report 2023.*

OSPAR's vision is 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 Strategy presents 12 strategic objectives and 54 time-bound operational objectives to guide OSPAR's work until 2030 (Annex 2).

It describes the principles and approaches which Contracting Parties apply to their work; how OSPAR engages with the wider international community; and the vital role of monitoring and assessing the state of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

The NEAES 2030 is supported by an Implementation Plan (OSPAR Agreement 2021-02) which translates the strategic and operational objectives into specific actions and provides a mechanism for OSPAR to monitor progress against our commitments.

This first report summarises the progress we have made in implementing the NEAES 2030. Highlights include:

- the most authoritative assessment of the status of the North-East Atlantic (QSR 2023) to date;
- the designation of the largest Marine Protected Area in the North Atlantic (North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin (NACES) MPA) now extended to include the seafloor;
- the adoption of OSPAR's second Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter;
- the implementation of the OSPAR Arctic Outcomes Roadmap including engagement with Arctic stakeholders on how OSPAR can enhance protection of the Arctic marine environment; and
- the publication of QSR assessments fully dedicated to ocean acidification and climate change.

The report also describes the progress made in putting in place a comprehensive programme of work to deliver the NEAES 2030; how we have stepped up international engagement; and how we propose to increase our efforts between now and the planned Ministerial review in 2025.

Continued efforts have also been made to ensure that OSPAR's work contributes directly to the implementation of the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive, not only the monitoring and assessment of environmental status, but also the development of collective threshold values, targets and programmes of measures.



Ministers from around the North-East Atlantic met online and in Cascais, Portugal in 2021 to agree OSPAR's NEAES 2030

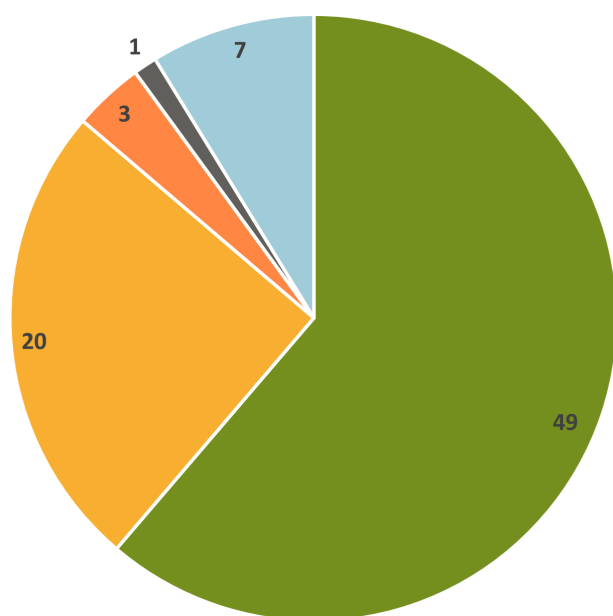


## 2. What has OSPAR done to implement the objectives of the NEAES 2030?

NEAES 2030 objectives are fulfilled through “tasks” that are implemented by the OSPAR Committees and other subsidiary groups (Annex 1). Progress is reported to the annual OSPAR Commission meeting by means of a management report that uses a traffic light (Red/Amber/Green) system to communicate the overall state of progress, resourcing and programme-level risk. A snapshot of the NEAES Implementation Plan is made publicly available following the annual OSPAR Commission meeting.

Of the 80 approved tasks reviewed at the 2023 OSPAR Commission meeting:

- 7 (9%) have already been completed;
- 49 (61%) were on track;
- 20 (25%) were not on track but with no major issues;
- 3 (4%) were not on track due to lack of resources and were flagged “red” for the attention of the OSPAR Heads of Delegation (HOD); and
- 1 (1%) had not reached its start date.



- Task on track
- Task not on track - no major issues
- Task not on track, issues require attention of HOD
- Task start date not reached yet
- Task completed

Figure 3: State of play on tasks reported to OSPAR 2023

Tasks have been completed on:

- Eutrophication: the implementation of an automated eutrophication assessment tool (“COMPEAT”) and agreement on threshold levels for eutrophication parameters;
- Marine litter: dissemination of the outputs of OSPAR’s first regional action plan on marine litter, agreement on a second action plan (Figure 4), and publication of a review of evidence on harm;
- Marine Protected Areas: completion of the roadmap for the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA; and
- Cumulative assessment: OSPAR’s QSR 2023 has considered the cumulative effects of pressures (and the activities and drivers that create them) on marine ecosystems and ecosystem services in each Thematic Assessment.

OSPAR 2023 agreed inclusion of a further 22 new tasks into the Implementation Plan. These include, for example, tasks on:

- improving our ability to assess and quantify eutrophication to support the setting of nutrient reduction targets;
- ensuring sufficient measures on nutrient reduction are in place;
- nature based solutions to sequester nutrients;
- reviewing how climate change and ocean acidification may influence sources and behaviours of radioactive substances in the marine environment;
- development of additional marine litter reduction targets;
- development of an action plan for benthic shelf habitats;
- a management strategy to reduce the introduction of non-indigenous species through ship biofouling;
- minimising, and where possible eliminating incidental bycatch of marine birds;
- developing good practice guidelines on reducing noise from geophysical surveys and use of explosives in offshore industries;
- developing practical approaches to ecosystem-based management both in national waters and in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

These examples give a good indication of the range of issues covered by OSPAR and its specialist committees and other subsidiary bodies.

There are another 18 tasks which have been drafted but where Contracting Parties are yet to identify resources to lead the work. These have not been included in the Implementation Plan but have been placed in a “holding pen” until the necessary resources can be identified. This is a key challenge for the OSPAR Contracting Parties and for the NEAES 2030 itself.

## The 2nd Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter

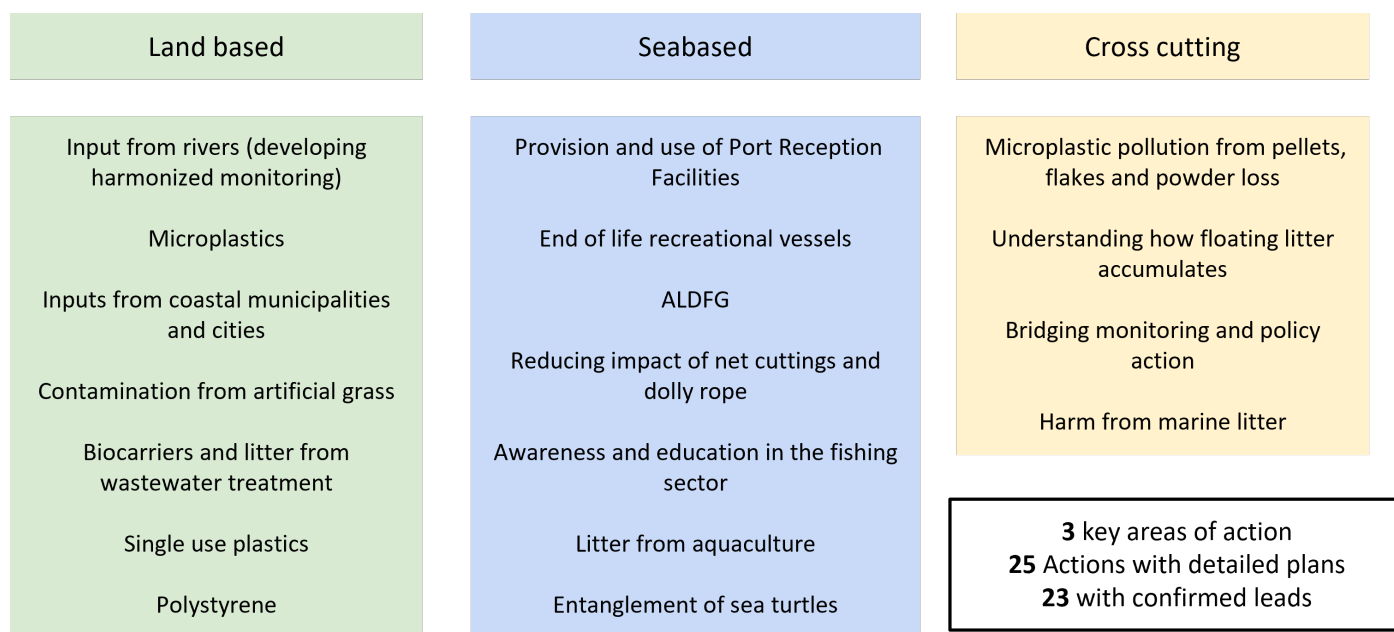
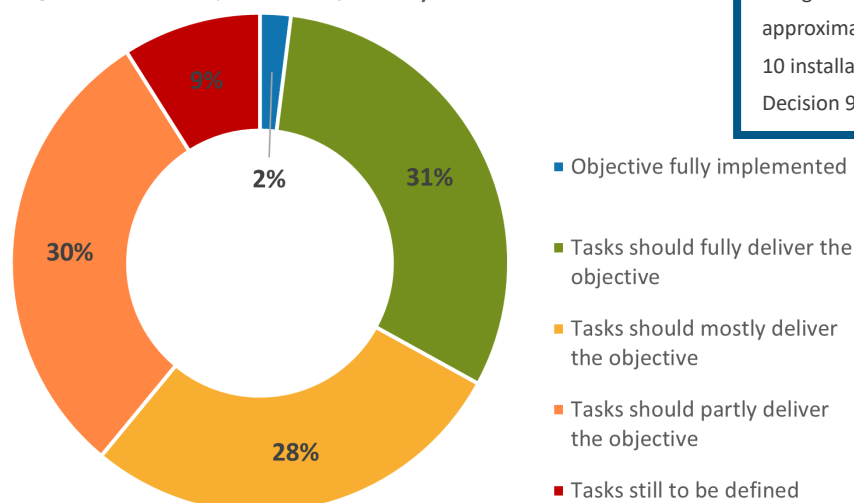


Figure 4: Examples of actions being implemented under OSPAR's second Marine Litter Regional Action Plan

An exercise was conducted during 2022/23 to assess the sufficiency of NEAES tasks, including those agreed at OSPAR 2023. An assessment was made by the OSPAR Committees and subsidiary bodies of whether the NEAES tasks would fully deliver each of the relevant operational objectives. Summary results are presented in Annex 2 to this report. While 61% of objectives are mostly or fully covered by the current tasks, the rest are only partly covered or still need to have tasks defined and agreed. The biggest implementation gaps are for biodiversity and climate change and ocean acidification. The creation of a new working group on climate change and ocean acidification should help to resolve this present situation. The position on biodiversity is possibly more intractable due to resource constraints within the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat. For example, tasks have been drafted on nature-based solutions and restoration but they lack national leads and have not been entered into the Implementation Plan yet.

This exercise will be repeated ahead of the 2025 Ministerial meeting. One important focus will be on the extent to which the time-bound targets in the NEAES operational objectives have been met.



New initiatives being developed under the NEAES 2030:

- Establishment of a new working group on climate change and ocean acidification (from 2023) and a group dedicated to the sustainable management of offshore renewable energy development;
- Development of an action plan for marine birds (target adoption in 2024);
- Development of an action plan for benthic habitats on the coastal shelf (target adoption in 2025);
- Development of an action plan on underwater noise (target adoption in 2025);
- Development of a harmonised Comparative Assessment methodology to support the assessment for derogation proposals to leave in place parts of disused offshore oil and gas installations (target adoption in 2024). Since 1998, approximately 170 installations have been decommissioned and 10 installations granted derogations in accordance with OSPAR Decision 98/3.

Figure 5: assessment of sufficiency of tasks to implement the objectives; the breakdown shows the percentage of objectives which fall into each category

# The North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area

In 2023 OSPAR Contracting Parties agreed to extend its largest Marine Protected Area (MPA) to include the seabed and a number of additional species and habitats, such as coral gardens and deep-sea sharks, within the scope of the MPA. The North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA was originally designated in 2021 with the goal of protecting, conserving, maintaining, and restoring seabird populations and marine biodiversity.

## OSPAR measures

[Roadmap for further development of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area \(Revised in 2022\)](#)

[OSPAR Recommendation 2021/01 on the Management of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area](#)

[OSPAR Decision 2021/01 on the establishment of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin Marine Protected Area](#)

## THE STORY OF... PROTECTING AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

The OSPAR Maritime Area encompasses extensive areas in the Wider Atlantic (Region V) and the Arctic Waters (Region I) that are beyond the limits of national Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). This Area Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) covers approximately 40% of the OSPAR Maritime Area. OSPAR has agreed to designate Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in ABNJ with the aim of achieving an ecologically coherent and well managed network of MPAs.

### REGION V: WIDER ATLANTIC

12 OSPAR MPAS IN ABNJ  
1 055 043 KM<sup>2</sup> OR 19.5% OF ABNJ

#### 2006

Portugal formally nominates the Rainbow Hydrothermal Vent Field as an MPA

#### 2010

OSPAR collectively designates 6 MPAs in ABNJ

#### 2011, 2012, 2014

The United Kingdom nominates 3 MPAs in ABNJ

#### 2012

The Charlie-Gibbs North High Seas MPA is collectively designated

#### 2021

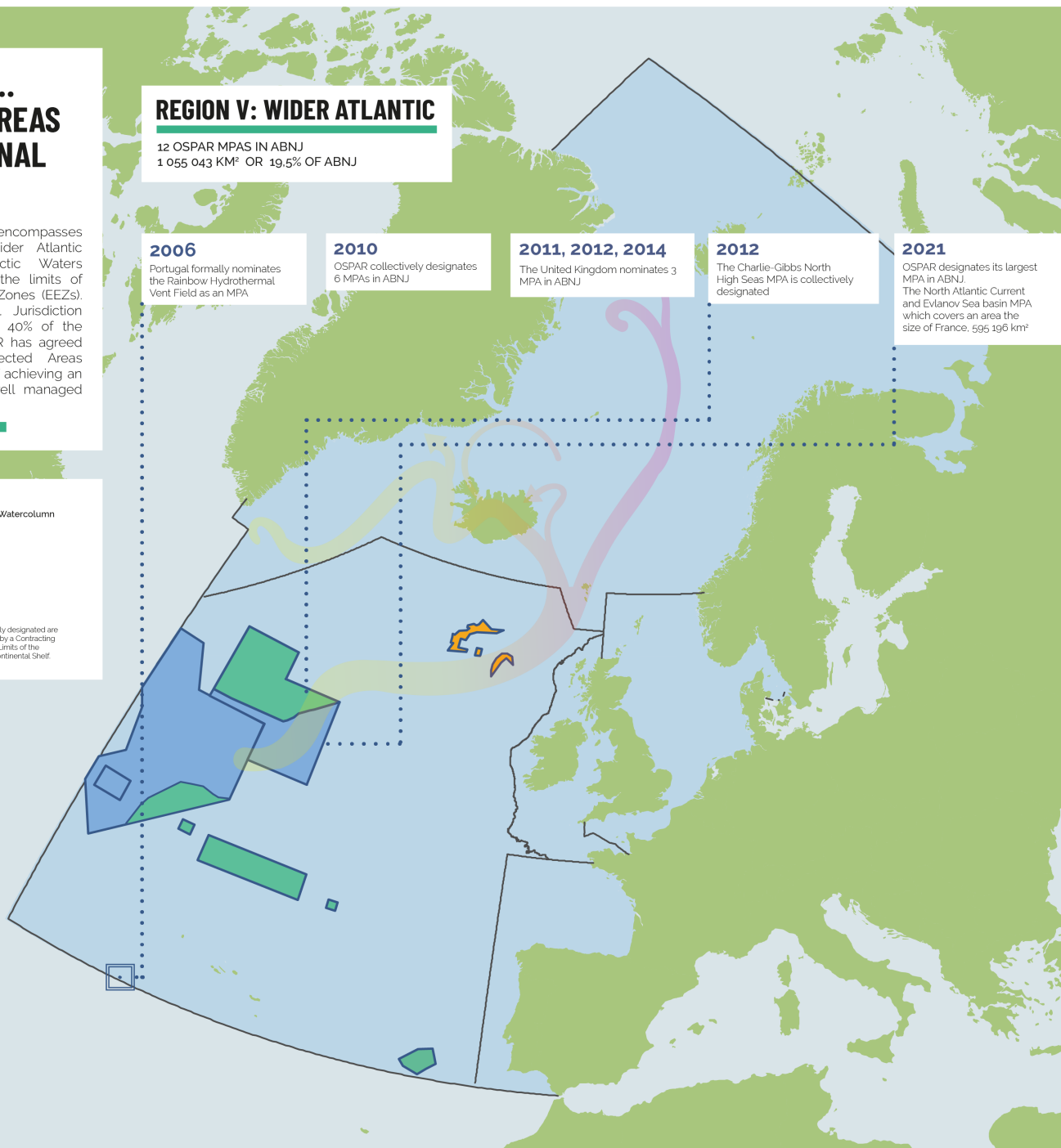
OSPAR designates its largest MPA in ABNJ. The North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA, which covers an area the size of France, 595 196 km<sup>2</sup>

OSPAR Designated MPA  
Protecting: Seabed/Subsoil/Watercolumn

OSPAR Designated MPA  
Protecting: Watercolumn

Nationally Nominated MPA  
Protecting: Seabed/Subsoil

Those MPAs that have been nationally designated are within areas subject to a submission by a Contracting Party to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for an Extended Continental Shelf.





### 3. What has OSPAR done to monitor and assess the marine environment?

The Quality Status Report (QSR) 2023 is our latest holistic assessment of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. It reviews our progress in moving towards OSPAR's vision of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic, which is productive, used sustainably and resilient to climate change and ocean acidification and recommends additional actions which may be taken up in the NEAES 2030.

The QSR 2023 provides the evidence to support effective science-based policy. It applies a conceptual framework (DAPSIR – Drivers, Activities, Pressures, State, Impacts and Responses, Figure 6) to better apply the ecosystem approach (as defined in the NEAES 2030) in order to understand the link between human activities, the pressures they exert and the effect they have on the state of the marine environment. The use of DAPSIR in the QSR 2023 also evaluates the impact that changes in environmental status have on the ecosystem services that the North-East Atlantic provides. The transboundary nature of marine environment issues means that regional-scale assessments such as the QSR 2023 give a more comprehensive picture of the state of our seas than national assessments.



# OSPAR

QUALITY STATUS REPORT 2023

#### QSR 2023 key findings

The key findings of the QSR 2023 show that: Climate change and ocean acidification are drivers of major change; Despite improvements in some fish populations, many are not in good status; Marine birds are still in trouble; Many marine mammals remain at risk, even while some species are recovering; Negative impacts from oil and gas activities continue to decrease; Marine litter levels remain high despite signs of improvement; Pollution by radioactive substances has been prevented; Hazardous substances are cause for concern; Noise pollution remains a threat; Introductions of new non-indigenous species (NIS) appear to have decreased; Benthic habitats continue to be damaged; Plankton, the base of the marine food web, are impacted in pelagic habitats; We know relatively little about the status of marine turtles; The state of marine food webs is of great concern; Eutrophication persists <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/quality-status-reports/qsr-2023/synthesis-report/key-messages/>

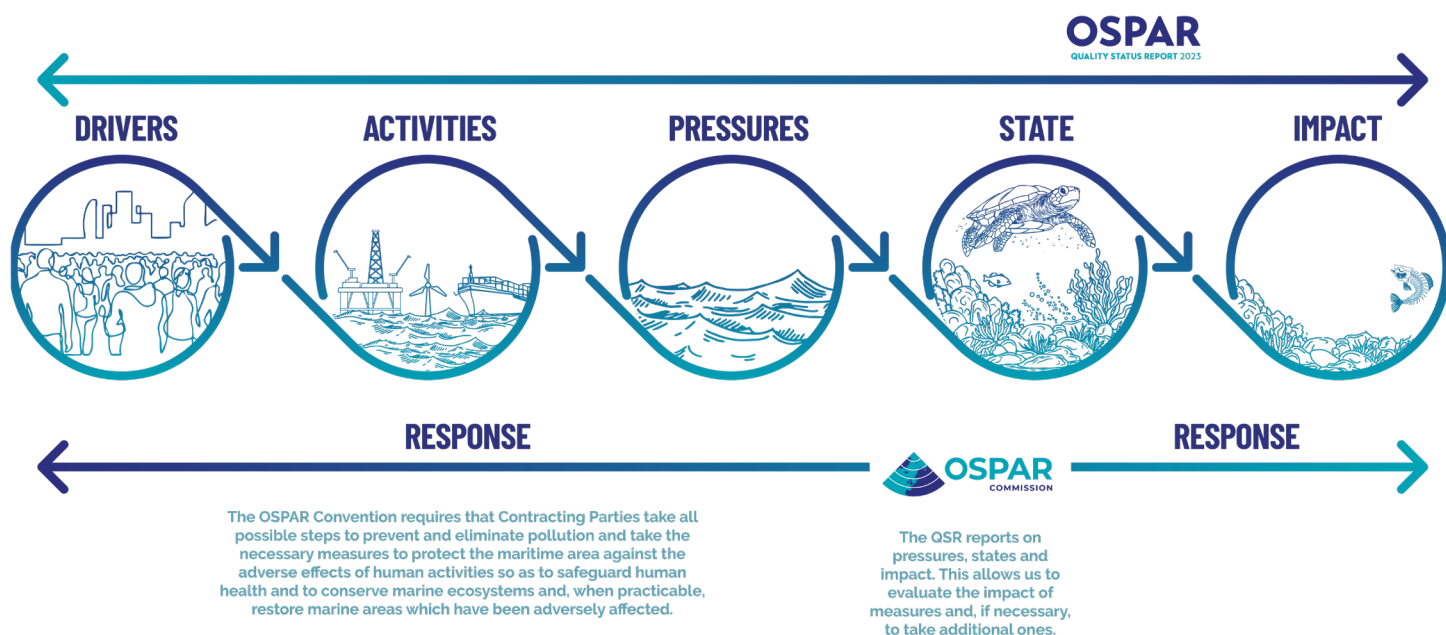


Figure 6: The DAPSIR approach as used in OSPAR's QSR 2023

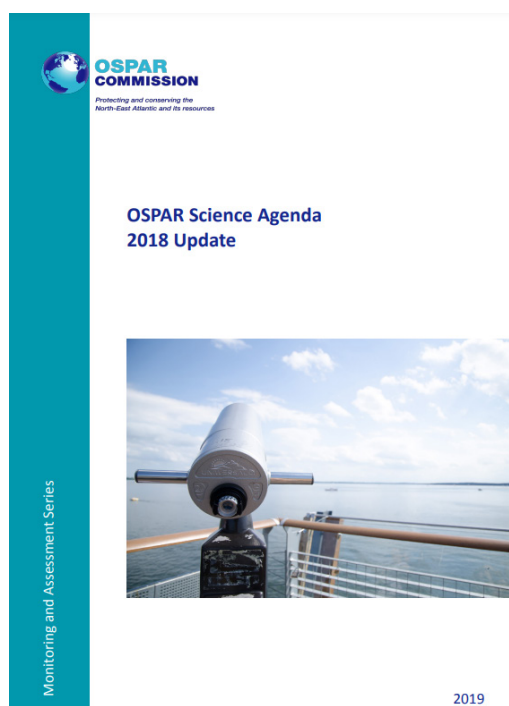
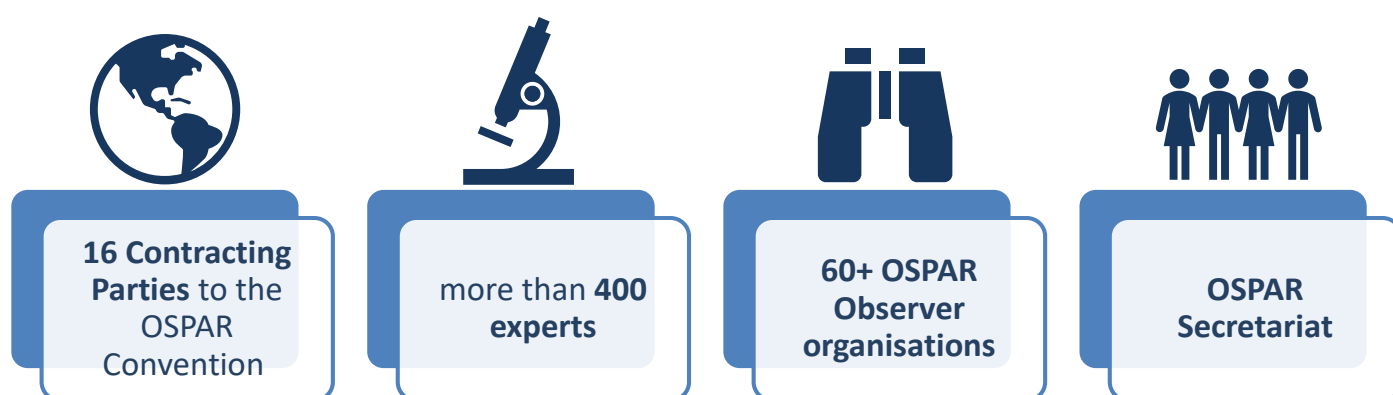
Over 400 scientists and policy experts have collaborated on the QSR 2023 over nearly three years to deliver more than 120 assessments, common indicator assessments, feeder reports, and other assessments. The Synthesis Report captures the main findings and recommendations of the QSR 2023 highlighting the bright spots.

The QSR also identifies new, emerging and increasing human activities where additional action might be needed by the OSPAR Commission, over and above the present Strategy. For example as aquaculture expands, additional measures to reduce the risk of non-indigenous species, disease, contamination, and eutrophication may be needed; current work on the cumulative effects of offshore wind on bird populations will need to be extended and deepened.

The QSR 2023 is published in the OSPAR Assessment Portal online and is freely accessible to all. A communication plan covering January 2022 - June 2025 guides our engagement with important audiences and stakeholders including: the publication of Friday Ocean Findings newsletters to share the assessments; a programme of events to disseminate the QSR 2023; the production of communication products; and a stakeholder event to discuss next steps that OSPAR should take based on the QSR 2023 findings. Initial reactions from stakeholders have been very positive.

Regular monitoring and assessment will continue to be a cornerstone of OSPAR's work. We will develop a new joint assessment and monitoring programme to ensure coordination beyond the QSR 2023 and to help us assess the effectiveness of OSPAR measures and other actions to implement the NEAES 2030.

## The QSR in a nutshell



## The OSPAR Science Agenda

The OSPAR Science Agenda sets out our most important research needs in the broad science areas that underpin OSPAR work. First published in 2015 and revised in 2017, the OSPAR Science Agenda is now being updated to include the knowledge gaps identified in the QSR 2023. It is a key tool linking OSPAR with science providers and funders and enhancing coordination at national, regional and global level on topics where improved knowledge is most needed.

Figure 7: OSPAR Science Agenda 2018 update (hyperlinked)

## 4. What has OSPAR done to demonstrate global leadership?

The OSPAR Commission has an important role to play in contributing to global efforts to protect the marine environment and supporting its Contracting Parties to deliver their global obligations, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The recent conclusion of the BBNJ Agreement and the fact that nearly 40% of the OSPAR Maritime Area is in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction increases the importance of this global leadership role.

International engagement and cooperation are a cornerstone of OSPAR's work. OSPAR fosters international cooperation and partnerships among its member countries, the European Union, and global partners, including, amongst others, with other Regional Seas Conventions, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the Arctic Council, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

Through the NEAES 2030, OSPAR contributes specifically to SDG 13 on Climate Action, to SDG 14 on Life Below Water – with a particular focus on reducing pollution of all kinds (SDG 14.1), restoring degraded habitats (SDG 14.2), addressing the impacts of ocean acidification (SDG 14.3), and conserving and protecting biodiversity (SDG 14.5) – and to SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals.

An important part of this cooperation is done through the Collective Arrangement, which aims to establish a regional platform to facilitate cooperation and coordination on area-based management as well as the sharing of information between competent authorities addressing the management of human activities in the North-East Atlantic region. After a three-year pause due to COVID-19, the latest Collective Arrangement meeting was organised in June 2023 and hosted by the OSPAR Secretariat. This meeting attracted great interest, with the largest participation recorded since its inception. The recently adopted BBNJ Agreement provided an important impetus to strengthen regional collaboration, with States agreeing to look into strengthening the role of the Collective Arrangement as a regional platform for collaboration and cooperation to support the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement in the North-East Atlantic region.

Another important aspect of OSPAR's work has been the establishment in 2022 of an Arctic Outcomes Working Group (AOWG) to deliver OSPAR's 2022-2025 Arctic Outcomes Roadmap. This Roadmap sets out the steps considered necessary to support the OSPAR Commission's commitment to protect the Arctic marine environment in the OSPAR Maritime Area. Based on the sources of scientific information and Indigenous knowledge gathered and discussions with stakeholders, the AOWG will develop initial proposals for possible future OSPAR measures and actions to enhance protection of the Arctic marine environment in the OSPAR Maritime Area, with the aim of their adoption at the OSPAR Ministerial meeting in 2025. An Arctic Workshop will be organised in the autumn of 2023 to discuss with Arctic stakeholders how OSPAR can enhance protection of the Arctic marine environment.





## 5. The way forward

OSPAR Ministers have agreed to meet again in 2025 to review progress in implementing the NEAES 2030. This will be an opportunity to adjust the Strategy if necessary. This might lead to the adoption of new measures and other actions but also to the setting aside of adopted measures or deprioritisation of other actions. In the meantime, we will focus on the following strategic priorities:

- OSPAR already has over 100 tasks under way to implement the NEAES 2030. These will mostly or fully implement more than half of the Strategy's operational objectives. We will continue to monitor progress on these tasks through the NEAES Implementation Plan and take action as and when needed.
- Where there are gaps in implementation we will identify, prioritise and find resources to close them, while making best use of external funding sources.
- We will review the NEAES 2030 in the light of the QSR 2023, and if necessary, make proposals for adjusting the Strategy to the OSPAR Ministerial meeting.
- We will review the extent to which current OSPAR structures and ways of working are effective in implementing the OSPAR Convention and delivering the NEAES 2030. A governance group has been established to lead this work and will complete its work in May 2024.
- In view of the wide scope of the NEAES 2030, there may be some sources of pollution or impact which are not adequately covered by the OSPAR Convention, or subject of effective measures in other organisations or conventions, including from new, emerging and increasing activities which were not relevant at the time the Convention was last amended. We will make an analysis of any limitations in OSPAR'S competence to adopt appropriate measures to implement the NEAES 2030, and if necessary, propose amendments to Ministers. An ad hoc working group has been established to conduct this analysis and will complete its work also in May 2024.

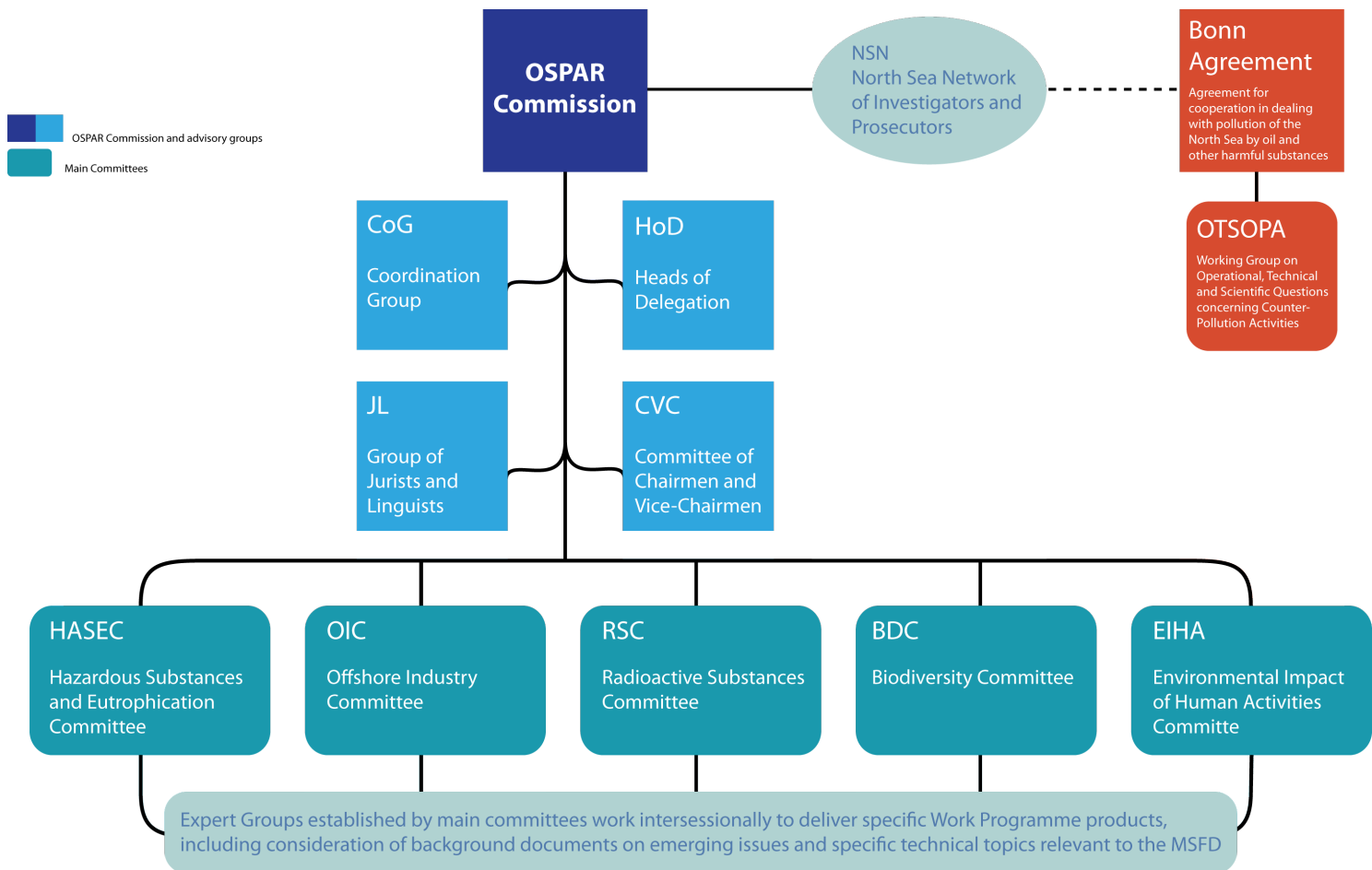




# Annex 1: OSPAR organogram

The OSPAR Commission is supported by five main Committees, which are in turn supported by working groups and correspondence groups which work intersessionally. Each group is supported by a Deputy Secretary. In 2022, the OSPAR Secretariat welcomed a new Deputy Secretary to work on cross-cutting issues to meet OSPAR’s commitments to ocean acidification and climate change amongst others.

In addition, the Heads of the Delegations of the Contracting Parties meet regularly to prepare the meetings of the Commission, to advise on management and to oversee the development and implementation of the agreements made by the Commission. The Commission is also supported by meetings of the Group of Jurists and Linguists and the Committee of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.



## Annex 2: Strategic and operational objectives of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030

This annex lists the 54 operational objectives of the NEAES 2030 and indicates the extent to which the tasks which have been included in the Implementation Plan up until OSPAR 2030 would deliver the objectives. OSPAR Committees and subsidiary bodies were asked to assess whether the current tasks would fully, mostly or partly deliver the objective, or whether tasks still needed to be defined.

The operational objectives have been highlighted as follows



Objective fully implemented



Tasks should fully implement the objective



Tasks should mostly implement the objective



Tasks should partly implement the objective



Tasks still to be defined

## Part II: Operational Objectives

### To achieve clean seas we will:

**Strategic Objective 1: Tackle eutrophication, through limiting inputs of nutrients and organic matter to levels that do not give rise to adverse effects on the marine environment.**



By 2022 OSPAR will implement an automated eutrophication assessment tool to deliver harmonised and transparent assessments for OSPAR and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and to provide support for the development of the SDG 14.1.1 Index of Coastal Eutrophication in 2025.



S1.O2: By 2022 OSPAR will determine the maximum inputs of nutrients for relevant assessment areas which prevent deterioration and enable the achievement of non-problem area status throughout the North-East Atlantic.



S1.O3: By 2024 OSPAR will identify and quantify relevant sources, including transboundary transport, and agree nutrient reduction needs for each Contracting Party to stay at or below the maximum input levels, reporting on progress towards these in 2025 and regularly thereafter.



S1.O4: By 2028 OSPAR will ensure that sufficient measures are taken to achieve the necessary input reductions to prevent coastal and offshore eutrophication in the North-East Atlantic, working where appropriate with national and international organisations and authorities concerned with managing nutrient emissions, discharges and losses.




S1.O5: By 2030 OSPAR will ensure that nutrient reduction targets and measures are sufficient to avoid adverse eutrophication effects in a changing climate.





S1.O6: By 2030 OSPAR will develop and implement a regional approach to applying nature-based solutions to reinstate and safeguard the natural capacity of the ecosystem to sequester nutrients through conservation and restoration of estuarine, coastal and marine habitats, where this is practicable.




Strategic Objective 2: Prevent pollution by hazardous substances, by eliminating their emissions, discharges and losses, to achieve levels that do not give rise to adverse effects on human health or the marine environment, with the ultimate aim of achieving and maintaining concentrations in the marine environment at near background values for naturally occurring hazardous substances and close to zero for human made hazardous substances.


 S2.O1: By 2022 OSPAR will introduce a revised approach to managing the OSPAR Lists of Chemicals for Priority Action and Substances of Possible Concern (LCPA and LSPC). By 2022 and regularly thereafter, OSPAR will identify contaminants of emerging concern for the marine environment and prioritise them for action, including promoting and where necessary supplementing measures under relevant EU legislation and international organisations.


 S2.O2: OSPAR will develop and identify marine-relevant assessment criteria for hazardous substances, for use in the Quality Status Report 2023 and subsequently further develop these, including for emerging contaminants, working closely with relevant experts, particularly in the Working Group Chemicals under the Water Framework Directive Common Implementation Strategy.


 S2.O3: By 2027 OSPAR will ensure that measures to eliminate discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances are in place to achieve or maintain good environmental status for hazardous substances, including through working regularly with other organisations.


 S2.O4: By 2026 OSPAR will further develop the Harmonised Mandatory Control System for the use and discharge of offshore chemicals to improve coherence with other relevant international requirements such as the EU REACH Regulation and the Biocidal Products Regulation.

Strategic Objective 3: Prevent pollution by radioactive substances in order to safeguard human health and to protect the marine environment, with the ultimate aim of achieving and maintaining concentrations in the marine environment at near background values for naturally occurring radioactive substances and close to zero for human made radioactive substances.

 S3.O1: On an ongoing basis OSPAR will further prevent, progressively reduce or, where that is not practicable, minimise discharges of radioactive substances through the application of Best Available Techniques (BAT), taking into account technical feasibility, radiological impact and legitimate uses of the sea.

 S3.O2: By 2025 OSPAR will identify and consider any obstacles in achieving further reductions in environmental concentrations of radioactive substances in the marine environment and examine possible solutions where appropriate.

 S3.O3: By 2025 OSPAR will identify the different types of loss of radioactive substances that may contribute to pollution of the marine environment. By 2027 OSPAR will determine if any additional measures are required to prevent such pollution, to the extent that such pollution is not already the subject of effective measures agreed by other international organisations or prescribed by other international conventions.

 S3.O4: By 2028 OSPAR will, following the outcome of the Quality Status report 2023, address, where appropriate, any uncertainties by reviewing and updating methodologies to better determine the possible impact of releases, emissions and losses of radioactive substances on marine ecosystems.



## Strategic Objective 4: Prevent inputs of and significantly reduce marine litter, including microplastics, in the marine environment to reach levels that do not cause adverse impacts to the marine and coastal environment with the ultimate aim of eliminating inputs of litter.



S4.O1: By 2022 OSPAR will agree an updated Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter including a set of prioritised “SMART” objectives to address new and emerging issues and to reduce the impacts of those items causing most harm to the marine environment.



S4.O2: By 2023 OSPAR will improve the evidence base on harm in relation to marine litter with the aim of developing and agreeing actions and measures to reduce harm by 2025.



S4.O3: By 2025 OSPAR will reduce by at least 50% the prevalence of the most commonly found single-use plastic items and of maritime-related plastic items on beaches in order to contribute to the achievement of relevant regional and EU threshold values building upon requirements for EU Member States in the EU Single Use Plastics Directive (Directive 2019/904), and by at least 75% by 2030.



S4.O4: By 2023 OSPAR will develop additional regionally coordinated quantitative reduction targets for all marine litter on beaches, and as soon as possible for other relevant environmental compartments, taking account of relevant regional and EU threshold values.



S4.O5: By 2025 OSPAR will adopt programmes and measures to control and, where appropriate, phase out plastic from materials placed at sea for the purposes of marine infrastructure developments.



S4.O6: By 2027 OSPAR will develop measures to control, and where possible, phase out discharges of plastic substances, including microplastics, contained in chemicals from offshore sources.



S4.O7: By 2025 OSPAR will develop approaches to prevent and reduce riverine marine litter inputs in cooperation with the relevant international river or river basin commissions, and other appropriate authorities and organisations.









S4.O8: By 2025 OSPAR will develop and implement measures to substantially reduce marine litter from fishing and aquaculture gear, in collaboration with those sectors, as appropriate, and by 2027 will determine the need for, and where appropriate adopt, targets or other actions for the separate collection of end-of-life fishing and aquaculture gear coherent with relevant EU directives and the update of the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.







## To achieve biologically diverse and healthy seas we will:

**Strategic Objective 5: Protect and conserve marine biodiversity, ecosystems and their services to achieve good status of species and habitats, and thereby maintain and strengthen ecosystem resilience.**

-  S5.01: 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.
-  S5.02: By 2022 OSPAR will identify barriers to the effective management of MPAs, and by 2024 take steps to address them appropriately to enable all OSPAR MPAs to achieve their conservation objectives.
-  S5.03: By 2024, OSPAR will establish a mechanism to provide that where Contracting Parties are authorising human activities under their jurisdiction or control that may conflict with the conservation objectives of OSPAR MPAs in the ABNJ, these activities are subjected to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
-  S5.04: By 2025 at the latest OSPAR will take appropriate actions to prevent or reduce pressures to enable the recovery of marine species and benthic and pelagic habitats in order to reach and maintain good environmental status as reflected in relevant OSPAR status assessments, with action by 2023 to halt the decline of marine birds.
-  S5.05: By 2025 OSPAR will have implemented all agreed measures to enable the recovery of OSPAR Listed threatened and/or declining species and habitats and will take additional measures as needed.
-  S5.06: Where the knowledge base is insufficient to achieve OSPAR's biodiversity objectives, OSPAR will take action to improve regional coordination for collection and sharing of data, information and knowledge, with elasmobranchs as a priority by 2023.

**Strategic Objective 6: Restore degraded benthic habitats in the North-East Atlantic when practicable to safeguard their ecosystem function and resilience to climate change and ocean acidification.**

-  S6.01: By 2023 OSPAR will identify habitats suitable for restoration, and develop a common knowledge base on the most appropriate and effective methods for restoration of degraded habitats.
-  S6.02: By 2025 OSPAR will develop a regional approach, including relevant qualitative and/or quantitative targets for restoration of degraded habitats suitable for restoration, and will then implement actions to achieve the targets as appropriate.





## To achieve productive and sustainably used seas we will:

**Strategic Objective 7: Ensure that uses of the marine environment are sustainable, through the integrated management of current and emerging human activities, including addressing their cumulative impacts.**



S7.O1: By 2028 OSPAR will further develop methods for the analysis of cumulative effects in the marine ecosystems of the North-East Atlantic, taking into account relevant spatial and temporal information on human activities, pressures, sensitive receptors and habitats, and use the results to inform the establishment of measures and actions to prevent, reduce or otherwise manage impacts.



S7.O2: By 2025 OSPAR will develop a coordinated management approach to ensure the number of non-indigenous species introduced via human activity is minimised and where possible reduced to zero.



S7.O3: By 2025 OSPAR will start accounting for ecosystem services and natural capital by making maximum use of existing frameworks in order to recognise, assess and consistently account for human activities and their consequences in the implementation of ecosystem-based management.



S7.O4: By 2023 OSPAR will assess, review and potentially revise the OSPAR criteria, guidelines and procedures relating to the dumping of wastes or other matter and to the placement of matter.



S7.O5: By 2024 OSPAR will review the risks from new, emerging and increasing pressures on the marine environment, taking account of OSPAR's Quality Status Report 2023, and prioritise them for action and the adoption of measures where necessary.



S7.O6: OSPAR will work with relevant competent authorities and other stakeholders to minimise, and where possible eliminate, incidental by-catch of marine mammals, birds, turtles and fish so that it does not represent a threat to the protection and conservation of these species and will work towards strengthening the evidence base concerning incidental by-catch by 2025.

**Strategic Objective 8: Reduce anthropogenic underwater noise to levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment.**



S8.O1: By 2025 OSPAR will agree a regional action plan setting out a series of national and collective actions and, as appropriate, OSPAR measures to reduce noise pollution.



S8.O2: By 2022 OSPAR will develop and implement a coordinated monitoring and modelling programme for continuous sound to support an assessment of anthropogenic underwater noise in the OSPAR maritime area.

**Strategic Objective 9: Safeguard the structure and functions of the seabed/marine ecosystems by preventing significant habitat loss and physical disturbance due to human activities.**



S9.O1: By 2023 OSPAR will deliver a quantitative evidence base on pressures from human activities causing physical loss and disturbance to seabed habitats. On this basis, OSPAR will address and, where possible, reduce these pressures from human activities within its competence and regularly engage with other competent authorities with a view to reducing these pressures within their respective areas of competence in order to help achieve or maintain good environmental status.



S9.O2: By 2023 OSPAR will review and, if appropriate, amend the categories of disused offshore installations where derogations may be considered under OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations, aiming to reduce the scope of possible derogations. The review will be based, inter alia, on the advancement of decommissioning technologies and on the best available scientific knowledge.



S9.O3: By 2023 OSPAR will agree on an approach and on actions to promote and advance decommissioning technologies under the framework of Decision 98/3 with the aim of reducing the scope of possible derogations.

## To achieve seas resilient to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification we will:

**Strategic Objective 10: Raise awareness of climate change and ocean acidification by monitoring, analysing and communicating their effects.**



S10.O1: By 2025 OSPAR will implement a coordinated long-term monitoring programme for ocean acidification variables.



S10.O2: By 2023 OSPAR will develop assessments of ocean acidification and climate change and will take the impacts of ocean acidification and climate change into account in relevant OSPAR indicators and assessments.



S10.O3: In 2023, and every 6 years thereafter, OSPAR will assess the current and projected impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on the OSPAR maritime area and its uses, to inform the development of national and international actions.

**Strategic Objective 11: Facilitate adaptation to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification by considering additional pressures when developing programmes, actions and measures.**



S11.O1: By 2025 OSPAR will develop a coordinated management approach to strengthening ecosystem resilience, including to the consequences of climate change and ocean acidification.



S11.O2: By 2023, and every six years thereafter, OSPAR will assess at a regional scale the OSPAR network of marine protected areas in respect of the resilience of marine biodiversity to climate change, with the aim of ensuring that the network provides a good representation of species and habitats and that its spatial design and management regime remains relevant.



S11.O3: From 2021 OSPAR will ensure that revisions to the OSPAR list of threatened and/or declining species and habitats and status assessments take account of any relevant impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.



S11.O4: From 2021 OSPAR will consider the additional pressures from climate change and ocean acidification both now and under future climate conditions in its regular review of measures and actions and update them as appropriate.

**Strategic Objective 12: Mitigate climate change and ocean acidification by contributing to global efforts, including by safeguarding the marine environment's role as a natural carbon store.**



S12.O1: By 2025 OSPAR will develop a regional approach to applying nature-based solutions for carbon storage and implement specific measures to protect and restore relevant carbon sequestration and storage habitats, such as seagrass beds, kelp forests and saltmarshes.



S12.O2: By 2025 OSPAR will take nature-based carbon storage into account when reviewing the criteria for the designation of marine protected areas, and reviewing the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats.



S12.O3: By 2024 OSPAR will review the results of monitoring that is undertaken in relation to carbon dioxide storage to assess whether the monitoring techniques deployed are adequate to demonstrate that carbon dioxide streams are retained permanently in the storage complex. By 2026 OSPAR will evaluate the effectiveness of OSPAR measures to ensure that carbon dioxide streams are retained permanently in the storage complex and will not lead to any significant adverse consequences for the marine environment, human health and other legitimate uses of the maritime area.



S12.O4: By 2023 OSPAR will develop common principles and by 2024 develop guidance to promote and facilitate sustainable development and scaling up of offshore renewable energy in a way that cumulative environmental impacts are minimised.

## Cross-cutting issues



SX.O1: By 2023 OSPAR will implement the regional coordination requirements arising from Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848 for those Contracting Parties that are EU Member States, including regional lists of elements, aggregation and assessment methods and threshold values for the North-East Atlantic region or its sub-regions.



SX.O2: By 2024 OSPAR will initiate discussions on the development of a practical approach for regional-scale ecosystem-based management, including through the 'Collective Arrangement' and in cooperation with fisheries management bodies and other competent organisations, in order to strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change and to safeguard the marine environment, its biodiversity and ecosystem services.







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

## **OSPAR Publication 988/2022**

OSPAR Secretariat  
The Aspect  
12 Finsbury Square  
London  
EC2A 1AS  
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)20 7430 5200  
e: [secretariat@ospar.org](mailto:secretariat@ospar.org)  
[www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org)

© OSPAR Commission, 2023. Permission may be granted by the publishers for the report to be wholly or partly reproduced in publications provided that the source of the extract is clearly indicated.

© Commission OSPAR, 2023. La reproduction de tout ou partie de ce rapport dans une publication peut être autorisée par l'Editeur, sous réserve que l'origine de l'extrait soit clairement mentionnée.