

Habitat: Littoral chalk communities

OSPAR Recommendation 2013/01:

Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect Littoral chalk communities include designation of Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive and national fisheries measures



Description

The erosion of chalk exposures on the coast has resulted in the formation of vertical cliffs and gently sloping intertidal platforms with a range of micro-habitats of biological importance. Chalk cliffs and sea caves support various algal communities unique to this soft rock type.

Lower down the shore the generally soft nature of the chalk results in the presence of a characteristic flora and fauna, notably 'rock-boring' invertebrates. Such coastal exposures of chalk are rare in Europe, with those occurring on the southern and eastern coasts of England accounting for the greatest proportion (57%). There are around 120 km of chalk coastline on the French coast of Upper Normandy and Picardy and some chalk exposures at the coast in Denmark and Germany.

60%

Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. Some recent examples include:

1. Both the UK and France have implemented the Recommendation through the EU Habitats Directive which involves site mapping, designation, and subsequent monitoring of Special Areas of Conservation
2. The UK has introduced fisheries measures to prohibit demersal towed gears in Special Areas of Conservation which have chalk reef.

Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here for more information on the index.

References:

Background Document for Littoral chalk communities (OSPAR Publication 424)
OSPAR Recommendation 2013/01
OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)

Condition

Anthropogenic pressures have caused a rapid decline over the 20th century due to urbanisation, expansion of ports and harbours, improvement of coastal engineering, and the considerable extension of coastal protection. However, in recent years deterioration from anthropogenic causes has probably lessened. Coastal erosion, both horizontal and vertical, can be considerable, but is a natural coastal process and is important for the formation of microhabitats in the chalk cliffs. There has been a change in the type of threats over time; the main threats were formerly coastal engineering through urban and port expansion, shifting to pollution of inshore waters, public access and disturbance, and now the impact of non-native species.

