

Initial OSPAR contribution to the EU-MSFD Common Implementation Strategy work programme for 2014 and beyond

1. Introduction

OSPAR road map on the regional implementation of the MSFD

The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD; Directive, 2008/56/EC) requires Member States to coordinate its implementation at a (sub-)regional scale, using the Regional Sea Convention where practical and appropriate. In that context, Member States shall, as far as possible, build upon relevant existing programmes and activities already developed. OSPAR, at its 2010 Ministerial meeting in Bergen (Norway), agreed upon a *road map* to guide the OSPAR regional implementation framework for this Directive. It outlined what and how the OSPAR countries should do on coordination and cooperation of the implementation of the MSFD within the OSPAR Convention in the period 2010-2020, taking their national obligations into account. The important elements of the road map are included in the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. OSPAR, through its Contracting Parties and its Secretariat has engaged strongly with the European Union MSFD Common Implementation Strategy and the various working groups that deliver the strategy. Active involvement continues in the EU Marine Strategy Coordination Group, the Project Coordination Group and the various EU data and technical groupings. OSPAR continually aims to improve its engagement with the MSFD implementation process to the benefit of the marine environment and an efficient use of Contracting Parties' resources.

Five priorities towards 2018

In 2012, the OSPAR Commission adopted *Finding Common Ground*, which documented OSPAR progress on the objectives for a coordinated approach with respect to the first deliverables of the MSFD implementation-cycle 2012-2015: initial assessment, defining good environmental status (GES) for the marine waters, and setting environmental targets and indicators. Based on this and the original road map, the *Finding Common Ground*–document of 2012 identified 5 key priorities for OSPAR-level work between 2012 and 2018, for which additional outcomes were achieved in 2013:

1. **To develop common indicators across the GES-descriptors.** In 2013 OSPAR agreed upon a set of OSPAR-wide and regional common indicators and a set of candidates to be developed further towards common indicators. The ambition is that OSPAR will add common indicators to this list in the years to come.
2. **To include the common indicators in the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP) of 2014.** In 2013, OSPAR decided that common indicators should be the basis for an Intermediate Assessment in 2017. The aim of this Intermediate Assessment is to facilitate the Contracting Parties in regional coordination of the update to their MSFD initial assessments in 2018. To that end, the use of prioritised candidate indicators will also be part of this Intermediate Assessment in 2017 when possible. The Intermediate Assessment will be followed by an OSPAR Quality Status Report (QSR) around 2021.
3. **Developing agreement on common policy requirements and opportunities for coordination in the development of measures, in 2014.**

4. **Developing agreement on the need for collective OSPAR action with regard to the preparation of the 2018 updates of national initial assessments.** This priority will be met by the 2017 OSPAR Intermediate Assessment.
5. **Considering opportunities for regionally coordinated data and information reporting,** linked to the national obligations of the OSPAR countries to report as EU-Member States to the European Commission upon their deliverables. In this area, the OSPAR Secretariat is making progress on the OSPAR Data and Information Management System (ODIMS) against the OSPAR Data and Information Management Strategy which aims to facilitate sharing and reuse of available OSPAR data and information.

Aim of this document

The OSPAR countries who are EU Member States are very keen that the work they do on regional coordination and collaboration within this regional sea convention (RSC) is coordinated with the EU-wide work they are part of within the EU Common Implementation Strategy on the MSFD (EU-CIS) together with the European Commission. It is essential that work planning between the EU and the regional sea conventions is streamlined with a clear division of roles between national, regional and EU-level activities, so that work being carried out at each level is mutually supportive and duplication of work is avoided.

The EU-CIS has recognized this in the *MSFD Common Implementation Strategy – future priorities –* document. The EU-CIS invited the RSC's to contribute to the development of the new work plan of the EU-CIS beyond 2013. The ambition of the EU-CIS, as agreed by the Marine Directors meeting in May 2013, is to further strengthen the role of the RSC's by asking them to:

- Contribute to the CIS work programme on the different working areas;
- Support some reporting obligations of the EU member states within RSC “roof reports”¹;
- Exchange information on developments within their RSC;
- Contribute to practical coordination, e.g. joint time/calendar planning.

The Marine Directors also stressed the important input of Member States and the European Commission as parties to Regional Sea Conventions and the specific role of those which are party to more than one Regional Sea Convention to foster better cooperation between RSCs (and indeed River Commissions).

This document is the OSPAR Commission response to the invitation of the EU-CIS to strengthen the role and to streamline the work of this particular RSC. At the same time it has the aim to guide our update of the OSPAR work programme on the regional coordination of the implementation of the MSFD, within the road map as set out in 2010. It does so by linking our five priorities stated in 2012 to the concrete questions asked by the EU-CIS to the RSCs in the *MSFD Common Implementation Strategy – future priorities –* document.

To take a pragmatic approach on linking OSPAR work to the EU-CIS, this document follows the structure of the working areas of the EU-CIS:

- Section 2: Basic perspective on the role of OSPAR in relation the EU-CIS
- Section 3: Assessment and monitoring of the marine environment

¹ In this document, by “roof reports” is meant documents that report on RSC common understanding, process coordination and activities, as well as thematic assessments and synthesis jointly prepared at the regional level.

- Section 4: Information and knowledge exchange on the marine environment and joint OSPAR documentation for Member States' reporting
- Section 5: Management, measures, economic and social analysis of human activities affecting the marine environment
- Section 6: Cross-cutting issues

Each section will take up the questions asked to the RSC's, linked to the activities described for that specific working area.

The document does not provide views on the EU CIS structure and procedure.

This document can be seen as a follow-up to the OSPAR publication *Finding Common Ground* and will thereby further contribute to the structuring of OSPAR internal work on the regional coordination of the MSFD implementation by OSPAR Contracting Parties that are Member States of the EU.

2. Basic perspective on the role of OSPAR in relation the EU-CIS

General considerations

- The dedicated mission of an RSC such as OSPAR to foster marine environmental protection equips it with the experience, expertise and detailed knowledge about the status of its marine region, which are unique strengths as required for regional coordination of MSFD implementation.
- The consensus decision-making of Contracting Parties working together is a prerequisite for reaching viable solutions that meet the Contracting Parties' needs and the MSFD needs.
- Nested institutional organisation is required to find solutions to problems that transcend the smaller scales. This is a very central issue for effective marine environmental policy so that measures are implemented at all scales necessary. Even though this implies some 'redundancy' between levels, this is necessary to ensure coherence and effectiveness.
- The current economic constraints require all actors to be extremely vigilant to the efficiency of work at all levels. The regional level can only be efficient if the EU and the Member States have resources (human resources / time / financial resources) to contribute to all levels required.

Current challenges

- Too many meetings at regional and EU level. This is especially challenging for (smaller) MS with waters in different basins and is not efficient in terms of use of resources.
- In order to deliver the MSFD's integrated adaptive, cyclic and coordinated work at all geographic scales increased numbers of policy and expert staff will be needed. Efficiency decreases considerably when access to, and use of, information is uneven between countries and between the policy, the management and the expert level.
- Regional level work needs to be seen to be on the critical path for correct MSFD delivery.
- EU-level work often seen as the main (& default) solution level – are alternatives better?
- How to balance a “European wide level playing field” against respecting the different ecosystems and geography of marine (sub)regions all over Europe?
- How to balance at EU level control of the implementation of the Directive against subsidiarity and proportionality?

- How to engage and make best use of processes and instruments in other policy areas to enhance synergy?
- MS need to prioritise resource allocation.

What is the OSPAR perspective on EU / RSC work division?

1. The EU CIS framework is expected to provide all basic EU-wide common elements. This can be basic guidance on interpretation of the MSFD and common understanding on determining GES, describing targets, indicators, monitoring programmes and measures etc. This also includes the organization of underpinning scientific advice. The RSCs can provide from their experience contributions to inform the development, elaboration and implementation of such EU-wide common elements (there are examples of transfer of methodologies between RSCs at national level; precursors of more universal agreement). More detailed methodology and regional coordination for application of EU-wide approaches (e.g. common indicator development, monitoring requirements, defining measures) can be developed and undertaken at RSC level. Parties which are Member States coordinate themselves at RSC level in commonly implementing these in the (sub)regional application of an ecosystem-based approach. Where 'innovative' approaches that are relevant for the EU as a whole are being developed in a particular RSC, this should be done in a transparent manner (with feedback through the relevant CIS group), so that all EU Member States are suitably informed and have opportunities for feedback, and if practically feasible, participation.
2. Other actors working at European scale for the MSFD such as EEA and ICES (which rely to a certain degree on shared resources) should also be transparent about their plans for the purpose of MSFD CIS and OSPAR planning. In this regard it is important that work flow timelines and deadlines for delivery are mutually clarified.
3. The OSPAR Convention covers a broad swathe of policy and applies beyond EU waters. The work of the OSPAR Commission requires and values the contribution of all its Contracting Parties, also the non-EU States. RSCs provide the platform for working together with the non-EU countries in the (sub-) region, so that the common concerns are addressed together.
4. OSPAR and its Contracting Parties are willing to contribute further to encourage transfer of knowledge between different regions.
5. On a practical level, OSPAR wants to align work programmes between OSPAR and EU-CIS and with other RSCs whenever feasible and practical; to share information on work plans and mutually adjust when needed. The aim should be to have explicit plans with clear targets and outputs so that work programmes complement each other rather than duplicate. Such sharing and alignment should be two-way and not just a top-down process. OSPAR continues to explore such issues, for instance opportunities for pragmatic cooperation and coordination with other RSCs are to be considered by OSPAR's main thematic Committees
6. No MOU with the European Commission is needed, as the European Union is a Contracting Party to the OSPAR Convention already (represented by the European Commission).
7. OSPAR expects the CIS to work in consultation with Regional Seas Conventions to agree solutions to timetable conflicts etc. that can deliver more efficient processes. A means of such mutual consultation will need to be worked out, given the RSCs represent a mix of EU and non-EU Contracting Parties. The Chairs of the Conventions can represent these issues for the RSC in forums such as the MSCG, formally delegating to other CP colleagues or to the Secretariat of the Convention. In the interest of efficiency and to respect RSC-internal resource allocation management, OSPAR would welcome that in the

conduct of EU CIS meetings, the Chair considers the RSCs as equal discussion partners when addressing work planning issues that affect the RSC.

8. Where OSPAR identifies particular opportunities or problems with regional coordination of the implementation of the Directive, there should be a means of escalating the best practice/issue to the EU CIS processes and other RSCs.
9. OSPAR sees its regular representation at meeting of EU Marine Directors as a valuable element of ensuring RSC MSFD activity is well informed and directed to support implementation. OSPAR can play a role in ensuring wider dissemination of information and consolidation of common approaches regionally. OSPAR would welcome that the EC and the EU Presidency consider inviting the OSPAR Executive Secretary to participate in the MSFD focused part of the EU Marine Directors proceedings.
10. The EU and its Member States are the main direct beneficiaries of OSPAR coordination work for the MSFD. While additional benefits of MSFD implementation are ultimately also contributing to OSPAR objectives, it should be recognized that MSFD work has required strong reliance on the regular OSPAR resources for various purposes (e.g. the Secretariat support to coordination meetings and preparing documentation). Noting that through the PCG all involved aim to enhance common benefits from the resources invested, OSPAR nevertheless would welcome to explore further all opportunities of appropriate financial and resource contributions to OSPAR for specific MSFD related tasks which the Contracting Parties assign to it. These include the increased use of projects, the participation in call for proposals or other possible contributions by Contracting Parties, including the EU (represented by the European Commission), taking into account the benefits (including resource benefits) that this increased collaboration will have for all Contracting Parties.

3. Assessment and monitoring of the marine environment

Key message: On-going OSPAR monitoring and assessment is being reviewed in the light of the MSFD (to make it mutually relevant) and to better address transboundary issues which underpin both OSPAR and MSFD monitoring.

The regional expertise and experience (e.g. on descriptors 5 and 8 where much OSPAR monitoring and assessment has already been undertaken) can help guide the development and agreement of EU-wide arrangements.

Planned deliverables (timing):

- **Identification and development of common indicators for (sub-)regional application by all Contracting Parties , with a view to agree on a complete set by 2016;**
- **Where appropriate, stepwise establishment of coordinated monitoring on the basis of the common indicators, geared towards providing results for common assessment products (see below);**
- **Specific monitoring and assessment support tools to be elaborated under the OSPAR Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme 2014-2021;**
- **Further *joint* monitoring activities (from 2016, cf. NS/CS project outcome in 2015)**
- **OSPAR Intermediate Assessment on the basis of common indicator assessments (in 2017);**

- **More extensive Quality Status Report (around 2021)**

As indicated above, this working area is linked to the key OSPAR **priorities 1, 2 and 4** which are mainly based on the notion of 'indicators', i.e.:

- to develop common indicators across the subject matter covered by the range of GES-descriptors (except D3 and D9; D7 has also not received OSPAR-wide priority).
- to coordinate national monitoring activities as a basis for common indicator assessments, taking up joint monitoring activities on a (sub-)regional level in 'shared monitoring programmes', e.g. to take on the common indicators in the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP) of 2014-2021.

In 2013 OSPAR agreed upon a set of OSPAR-wide and regional common indicators and a set of candidates to be developed further towards common indicators when possible by 2014 and the years after. The ambition is that OSPAR will add common indicators to this list as and when they are fully developed and cost-effective. The common indicators should form the basis of an Intermediate Assessment in 2017. The aim of this Intermediate Assessment is to facilitate the Contracting Parties in the regional coordination of the update to their MSFD initial assessments in 2018. To that end, the use of prioritised candidate indicators will also be part of this Intermediate Assessment in 2017, where possible. The Intermediate Assessment will be followed by an OSPAR Quality Status Report (QSR) around 2021.

OSPAR can furthermore provide coordination on monitoring that is not directly related to common indicators (e.g. time series monitoring that can be used for the updating of the Art. 8 assessment in addition to indicators). In addition, OSPAR will continue to collect data for mapping human activities and prepare, under the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme, thematic assessments (including on pressures and human activities). OSPAR is offering to share its expertise in these fields also within the broader EU process.

OSPAR's work in this area will also contribute to the MSFD CIS through:

- The further improvement of (sub-)regional coherence of MSFD implementation (Art. 11, Art 8, 9, 10, 13 and 17) on the basis of the identified OSPAR Common Indicators (cf. OSPAR agreement in 2013 that specifies which indicators will be addressed. This will be reviewed annually).
- Support for the development of possible additional Common Indicators on the basis of identified Candidate Indicators,

The above work will lead to:

- the elaboration of an indicator-based 'Intermediate Assessment' in 2017 as a contribution to Member States' updating of their initial assessment (due in 2018);
- support to Member States in the review of their GES determination and targets and indicators under Art. 9 and/or 10 in respect of their national definition of GES and targets reported in 2012 (until 2017 at the latest);
- associated improvements in indicator-related monitoring and assessment methods, which can be shared where relevant;

- coordinated components of monitoring programmes for the first implementation cycle, if time allows, or for the second cycle.

OSPAR's work in these areas will be informed, *inter alia*, by the project "Towards a Joint Monitoring Programme for the North Sea and Celtic Sea" under the Integrated Maritime Policy 'New Knowledge' call from the European Commission (delivering in 2015) and by the work of existing OSPAR groups, in particular the Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication, Biodiversity and Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committees and their relevant subsidiary bodies.

Additionally, EU CIS will be able to benefit from work already undertaken in OSPAR in other areas such as on assessment of coherence and representativeness of MPAs.

OSPAR will work to ensure an efficient web-based joint documentation/presentation of monitoring and assessment requirements and their results in order to demonstrate regional coherence, provide transparency and allow OSPAR Contracting Parties to incorporate regional deliverables into their national reporting.

4. Information and knowledge exchange on the marine environment and joint OSPAR documentation for Member States' reporting

Key message: OSPAR is working towards a system for making available data and information arising from the JAMP which could also support the contracting parties for the next round of the Art. 8 national assessments. Meanwhile, OSPAR will actively engage with the development in the WG DIKE and will contribute to the work for joint documentation (for reporting) and making information available in context of Art 19(3).

Planned deliverables and timelines (will be further specified by CoG):

- **common documentation for reporting at a (sub)regional level on monitoring programmes (2014);**
- **common documentation for reporting at a (sub)regional level on components of programmes of measures (2015);**
- **common documentation of elements of the Art. 17 updating, especially the 2017 OSPAR Intermediate Assessment (2017-2018);**
- **progressive development of the OSPAR Data and Information System to enable interoperability of data and information (incl. metadata).**

Towards more efficiency and quality of information

The MSFD Common Implementation Strategy – future priorities – document sets out two possible inputs from RSCs to the work on information and knowledge exchange:

1. Develop a concept for sharing data and information between EU, ICES and RSCs and translate it in a formal arrangement (e.g. MoU) (by 2014);
2. Align data flows and data needs for next round of initial assessment.

As for the first item, **develop a concept for sharing data and information between EU and RSCs**, OSPAR is committed to ensuring public access to relevant information, upon agreement of its Contracting Parties². This applies *a fortiori* to sharing information available in OSPAR to its Contracting Parties (except in well-defined cases described in law). As the European Union is a Contracting Party to OSPAR, a formal arrangement for sharing data and information between OSPAR and the competent EU institutions in the exercise of their functions is therefore not considered necessary.

Data management by OSPAR under ODIMS

The work on the OSPAR data and information strategy, which is the basis for developing the OSPAR Data and Information Management System (ODIMS) is linked to OSPAR **key priority nr 5**: Considering opportunities for regionally coordinated documentation of data and information for reporting, linked to the national obligations of the OSPAR countries to report as EU Member States to the European Commission on their deliverables.

Monitoring and assessment are key activities for the OSPAR Commission. In this context, a wealth of data, information and knowledge has been generated over the past 20-30 years. Only in a minority of cases, comprehensive data handling arrangements are in place. In 2012 the OSPAR Commission therefore agreed that there was a need to develop an OSPAR Data and Information System, including a key purpose to address the emerging MSFD information reporting and sharing developments.

Since 2012 OSPAR is working towards a more uniform and efficient way in which to provide high quality information to Contracting Parties as well as to other interested parties. For this OSPAR has developed the **OSPAR data and information strategy** (see Annex 1 below).

The OSPAR data and information management strategy involves making OSPAR data easier to access, an important underlying process which will provide the foundation to maximize the applicability of the data. The implementation of the OSPAR data strategy will mean that for all OSPAR data sets appropriate metadata and known data standards are applied. Also all relevant processed data and information will be accessible online (except in well-defined cases described in law). This would make it easier for Contracting Party Member States and the EU institutions to make use of appropriate data for the MSFD. However, there needs to be a clear identification of data and assessment products that Member States are using for the MSFD, and data and information for other purposes.

As for the second item, **align data flows and data needs for next round of initial assessment**, the last step of the OSPAR data and information strategy involves the transformation of data to assessment products. The strategy would facilitate access to and manipulation of OSPAR data for the production of the OSPAR assessments: an interim assessment in 2017 that can be used by Contracting Party Member States for the first review of their initial assessment, followed by an OSPAR Quality status Report around 2021. This work is closely linked to the on-going work on assessment and monitoring of the marine environment.

Once in place the data and information strategy or the web interface product (OSPAR information system) could potentially also be used in future for regionally coordinated reporting by EU Member States of data and information for the MSFD (see below).

OSPAR work contributing to Member States' reporting

While the reporting process itself is the responsibility of each Member State, OSPAR is working towards providing coordinated and common documentation in formats useful to Contracting Parties in their

² See OSPAR Convention Article 9 and the Rules of Procedure of the OSPAR Commission (Reference Number: 2005-17), Annex 3

reporting to the EU. In respect of the Member States' obligations arising from Art. 11 MSFD, OSPAR will contribute through the joint documentation of monitoring programmes using a focused, common and high-level report on monitoring coordination, together with information products ('fact sheets') on monitoring sub-programmes, mainly centered on the monitoring programmes that generate the data for the 'common indicators' adopted by OSPAR 2013 (e.g. indicators related to GES D5, D8, D10). In the future more detailed information on the monitoring programmes will be accessible through ODIMS.

Throughout the next implementation steps after 2014, the OSPAR coordination will address whether there are opportunities for providing joint documentation for:

- common elements of programmes of measures (2015)
- common elements of the Art. 17 updating (including of Art. 8 assessment – i.e. the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment (2017))

The joint documentation can consist of 'roof reports' on a general level and more detailed information (depending on the decisions made in CIS).

5. Management, measures, economic and social analysis of human activities affecting the marine environment

Key message: OSPAR is considering options for the development of a joint regional programme of measures. These options include the identification and agreement of cost-effective measures of a transboundary nature, the development of regional action plans for dedicated themes, the preparation of joint action of CPs in relation to the EU and other international organisations under Art. 13(5) and 15 MSFD, and the support of cost-benefit analyses for regional measures. OSPAR will also maintain an up-to-date list of existing OSPAR measures.

Planned deliverables and timelines: see table at the end of this section.

Introduction

The work on management, programmes of measures and the economic and social analysis of human activities affecting the marine environment is linked to OSPAR key priority nr 3 '*Developing agreement on common policy requirements and opportunities for coordination in the development of measures, in 2014*'.

Objectives

In the setting of future priorities within the EU Common Implementation Strategy for the MSFD, OSPAR will contribute to activities related to the development of programmes of measures and the activities on socio-economic analysis of measures, recognising the different scales and competences of management, as follows:

- 1) the exchange of information and coordination of measures that are primarily of national concern and responsibility;
- 2) the development of measures at regional level (e.g. through OSPAR decisions or recommendations) with a focus on transboundary issues;
- 3) the development of joint proposals for measures that are required to achieve GES but are in the competence of the EU or international authorities (such as river basins and/or shipping) and agreement of concerted actions of CPs to approach those bodies/authorities through OSPAR.

OSPAR is considering the scope for the development a joint regional programme of measures and the particular fields of action where coordination provides real added value in the achievement of GES. If agreed, any joint programme could include and document regional coordination of national measures, measures at regional level and concerted regional actions in relation to the EU or international authorities on measures to achieve GES in the region. Where OSPAR develops Regional Action Plans (RAPs) for selected (transboundary) themes that benefit from a regional approach to management they:

- may cover measures at all three levels (national, regional, EU/international), and
- may include a streamlining and/or enhancement of existing measures.

Any agreed measures and their implementation will be aligned with the timelines required by Contracting Parties to implement the MSFD. Where agreed, the development of regional action plans and regional measures is regarded as a continuous task and will be taken forward beyond 2015. Some of the RAPs and measures may be ready for inclusion in parts in the Contracting Parties' Programmes of Measures in 2015, others rather in the review of their Programmes of Measures by 2021 in the next MSFD management cycle. Consideration of further opportunities for regional cooperation and coordination of measures will be part of any future work plans of OSPAR and its committees.

Main issues – scope of work

Coordination of national measures

For measures at national scale or taken at national level, OSPAR will provide a platform for Member States to discuss coordination of those measures with a view to developing coherent approaches and ambitions to achieving GES in the region. To this end, Contracting Parties will exchange information on potential national measures at an early stage in order to allow an adaptation of the national planning of measures and approaches in the period up to 2015. The coordination of national measures will also support the identification of issues requiring regional, EU or international measures and that benefit from the development of Regional Action Plans (see below).

Identification and prioritization of measures

In the identification and prioritization of measures to achieve good environmental status OSPAR can build on:

- OSPAR measures deriving from existing recommendations, decisions and other agreements, and OSPAR environmental targets;
- the latest OSPAR Quality Status Report;
- national initial MSFD assessments and environmental targets;
- targeted analyses by OSPAR's subsidiary bodies.

On this basis, OSPAR will work jointly to identify cost-effective measures. A focus of work will be measures of a transboundary nature, targeting ecosystems and/or pressures that transcend the national scale (e.g. management of MPAs; gas/oil exploitation in open seas; chemical contamination and nutrient enrichment, in particular through long-distance transport; litter, noise).

Impact of measures and ESA

OSPAR will share best practice on how to assess the (cumulative) impacts of regional measures as well as the transboundary impact of (national) measures and thereby to provide support to national Strategic Environmental Assessments of MS' programmes of measures.

OSPAR can also foster the process towards consensus on which data on human (economic) activity should be gathered for the purpose socio-economic assessment of the region (intermediate assessment 2017, to be used by CP in the update of their MSDF-initial assessment in 2018) or for the purpose of decision making on the regional elements of OSPAR Regional Action Plans.

Regional Action Plans

Regional Action Plans (RAPs) may be developed for selected themes that require a more overarching regional approach to management. They may consist of measures on all three levels (national, regional, EU/international) and will include a streamlining and/or enhancement and/or acknowledgement of existing measures taken at national EU and international level. The development of a Regional Action Plan on marine litter (D10) has been agreed at OSPAR 2013 with a view for its adoption in 2014. Options for the development of further RAPs will be considered by OSPAR within the upcoming work of the Coordination Group (November 2013) and thematic Committees (Spring 2014).

On the development of a RAP on marine litter, OSPAR will cooperate with other RSCs that are also developing or considering the development of action plans on marine litter. OSPAR will exchange information with other RSCs during the development phase of the action plans on marine litter as well as on their implementation once adopted in order to foster better cooperation between RSCs for the benefit of EU coherence and those Member States which are party to more than one Regional Sea Convention.

The development of RAPs serves per se as a coordination process between EU member states sharing the same marine region. As the national implementation schedules for Art. 13 MSFD vary it must be regarded an interactive and iterative process of development, consultation and agreement.

Specific actions and timelines

Action	Process	Timeline
<i>Action 1:</i> Definition of 'what is a measure' and common concepts/language, how to address relation with existing policies - incl. adoption of guidelines on additional requirements of the MSFD	- Basic conceptual definitions by MSFD CIS (e.g. WGs ESA/GES) - Region-specific application by ICG MSFD / CoG	By March 2014 By March 2014
<i>Action 2:</i> Clarification what OSPAR coordination can cover in respect of (1) exchange of information on national drafting of programmes of measures ('best practices') and discuss any scope for transboundary coordination of national measures; (2) regional measures under OSPAR; (3) common recommendation for action by other competent international fora; in conjunction with this, agreement on the key aspects that underpin a 'regional action plan' (thematic, focus on particular pressures, strength of a regional component, ...).	- Intersessional work by ICG MSFD; - Contributions by committees and technical groups of OSPAR	First draft by March 2014; then on-going
<i>Action 2bis:</i> concept on the architecture of joint regional programme of measures and their documentation with a view to supporting Member States in reporting under Art. 13 (9) MSFD.	- ICG MSFD	By March 2014
<i>Action 3:</i> Identification and prioritisation of necessary	- First check by CoG November	By March 2014 first full

action: Main fields of action (which descriptors and pressures) for which OSPAR coordinated action is beneficial; Identification of themes suitable for RAPs and drafting of a work plan for development of RAPs including timelines and deliverables; Definition of the role of Committees in measure development	2013 - Intersessional work by ICG MSFD; contributions by committees (Spring meetings 2014) and technical groups of OSPAR	draft including timelines for RAPs; OSPAR decision June 2014; then on-going to be serving for MS' 2015 reporting on measures
<i>Action 4: Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter</i>	- Workshop November 2013 and Spring 2014 - Intersessional work by ICG-Litter - Proposal by EIHA April 2014	OSPAR decision June 2014

6. Cross-cutting issues

Key message: OSPAR contributes to coordination on project work, establishing scientific advice and aims to foster, in the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (for the management of human activities that affect the marine environment) and including on the basis of the MSFD, an intensified and improved dialogue between science providers, science programmers and users of scientific information for policy design and implementation.

The intrinsic aim of OSPAR – using the best available science to underpin programmes and measures for the protection of the marine environment – is also applicable to OSPAR’s co-ordinating role for MSFD implementation. An OSPAR Science (needs) Agenda is being developed, which includes knowledge needed for MSFD implementation and for supporting other areas of OSPAR work, e.g. the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the high seas.

Next to co-ordinating national efforts to close gaps in knowledge, mainly to improve effective use of resources for scientific work, the common science agenda is regarded as an opportunity to seek commonality at the EU level and to interact with scientific programmes outside of OSPAR for joint benefit.

Participation in the Project Coordination Group

OSPAR has made arrangements for active participation in the Project Coordination Group and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this work area. The OSPAR Commission has mandated the Secretariat to participate as OSPAR representative. The PCG should ensure and promote coherence between relevant research projects, maximize synergies with on-going and planned activities, and improve coordination and information exchange between the EU and Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs).

Identifying research needs

As a first step to identify priority science needs, OSPAR Committees have reflected (in the 2012-2013 meeting cycle) on research needs for their work, taking into account the findings of the QSR 2010 and current concerns. This has yielded a number of important, although sometimes fairly general, research questions. In the next meeting cycle these questions will be further elaborated by OSPAR’s technical groups (i.e. working groups and intersessional correspondence groups) with a view to establishing a first OSPAR-wide science agenda at the OSPAR Commission meeting in June 2014

To ensure that the issues on the science agenda will support the MSFD and OSPAR Strategies implementation processes in an effective and timely manner, an approach has been developed to classify

and prioritize research needs. This is work in progress and the intention of OSPAR is that the resulting 'Science agenda' can be used, in its successive versions ('living document') to inform scientific planning and resource allocation. The current methodology contains a template for each research question, using criteria to explain how closing this specific gap in knowledge would support policy and management.

An important step will be to define, in a structured and transparent manner, the main research needs for each of the themes OSPAR works on and to ensure including adequate coverage of MSFD needs and issues of common interest. Depending on the science need, an effective way could be to develop common proposals for projects under EU funding programmes.

The Contracting Parties and the OSPAR Secretariat are in particular liaising with projects and initiatives focusing on scientific support for MSFD implementation and environmental sustainability of maritime activities, and in particular OSPAR is:

- **Contributing to the EU project STAGES**

This EU project (FP7) has been tasked to, among other tasks, identify priority research needs for each MSFD Descriptor. OSPAR representatives have been actively involved in activities (workshops and consultations) of this project.

- **Participating in, and liaising with, scientific networks (ICES, JPI Oceans,) and on-going projects**

OSPAR has a long-standing and valued cooperation with ICES. An annual 'ICES Work Programme' is agreed by the OSPAR Commission with specific requests for scientific advice for which OSPAR allocates dedicated resources. The OSPAR Secretariat co-operates with scientific networks, such as ICES and a staff member participates in the Strategic Advisory Board of the Joint Programming Initiative on Oceans (JPI Oceans). The Secretariat occasionally participates in advisory groups or workshops etc. of relevant projects (e.g. STAGES, DEVOTES, ODEMM, VECTORS,...) with a view to providing information and input to research agendas in order to promote demand driven research. The work on common indicators (e.g. their testing) can directly benefit from synergies between work in OSPAR and in specific projects.

OSPAR data and information management strategy

The development of the OSPAR data and information strategy involves the following steps up to 2016.

Strategic phase	Outcome	Actions	Progress to date	Next phase of work
1. Understanding the data and information management needs of OSPAR	Understanding of expectations of Contracting Parties; clear indication of data and information management needs in the near to mid future (5-10 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review previous user needs surveys; update user needs; invite Committees to provide future data base development needed understand how OSPAR data can contribute to MSFD implementation 	<p>Committees invited to provide information on future database needs/ data base development during 2012/2013.</p> <p>Initial analysis of how OSPAR data might support MSFD implementation (cf. OSPAR 13/9/1 Annex 1)</p>	<p>Review of committee input;</p> <p>Update of user needs/ expectations;</p> <p>Evaluate a programme for addressing funding needs</p> <p>Complete evaluation of the contribution OSPAR data sets can make to MSFD implementation</p>
2. Reference files	Standard shape files available for consistent analysis across thematic areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agree OSPAR Boundary files agree OSPAR Coastline agree spatial layer showing all OSPAR monitoring stations. identify any other reference shape files 	Shape files for the outer and subregional OSPAR boundaries agreed and available on line;	<p>Resolve OSPAR Coastal extent;</p> <p>Develop spatial layer showing OSPAR monitoring stations;</p>
3. Data standards (links closely with metadata, and should be looked at together, metadata can show inconsistencies)	All OSPAR data sets to use common OSPAR data standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compile list of agreed data standards; ensuring compatibility with existing standards. (input from Info System task group) check all OSPAR data sets against agreed OSPAR data standards and implement changes to bring in line where necessary. 	Collation of information on data standards currently being used	Analysis of data standards in use; agreement of OSPAR data standards
4. Metadata	All data sets with INSPIRE compliant metadata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agree a metadata framework for OSPAR on basis of ISO/INSPIRE (input from Info system task group) document OSPAR metadata requirements ensure all OSPAR datasets meeting these requirements 	Collation of existing metadata standards;	<p>Agreement of OSPAR schema for metadata;</p> <p>Construction of OSPAR metadata catalogue</p>
5. Online accessibility	All data sets available on line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> depends on achieving phase 3 ensure arrangements in place to enable last published data set accessible via the online data catalogue 	<p>OSPAR data page on the OSPAR website;</p> <p>All data sets managed by the OSPAR Secretariat are available online;</p> <p>Where data is managed externally, links to online data are provided where available</p>	All OSPAR datasets accessible on line;
6. Arrangements for Data sharing	Clear intellectual property attribution and citation for use of OSPAR data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make OSPAR data policy visible agree Conditions of Use agree standard citation for 	Conditions of use agreed and displayed on the OSPAR website.	Develop and agree suitable data citations.

		use of OSPAR data and information		
7. Web interface product (Information system) NB this phase requires capital investment	Develop an online interface to facilitate access to OSPAR data and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drawing on user needs expressed in 2010/ 2011 undertake a new user needs assessment to determine the required parameters of this product determine budget engage a consultant to assist the Secretariat deliver 	2011 Consultants report outlining the broad scale specifications ; Draft call to tender for a build phase of a web tool; 3 scenarios prepared for submission to OSPAR2013 for investment over 3 years (2014-2016); over 2 years (2015-2016) and with no capital investment.	Understand Contracting Party requirements; Implement on the basis of Scenario 1 as agreed by OSPAR 2013. (3 year build)
8. Transformation of data to assessment product	Established pathways for transforming OSPAR data into assessment products			[Introduced at OSAPR 2013. To be further elaborated for update to CoG (2) 2013]