

Species & Habitat: Flat oyster and flat oyster beds

OSPAR Recommendation 2013/04:

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 flat oyster and flat oyster beds include national legislation, monitoring and mapping, restrictions on harvesting and restoration programmes



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Description

Ostrea edulis (flat oyster) is a sessile, filter-feeding bivalve mollusc associated with highly productive estuarine and shallow coastal water habitats. It is found naturally from the Norwegian Sea south through the North Sea down to the Iberian Peninsula and the Atlantic coast of Morocco and in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Natural oyster beds of *O.edulis* are found in estuarine areas from 0 - 6 m depth on sheltered but not muddy sediments, where clean and hard substrates are available for settlement. They have also historically occurred in deeper waters and offshore, down to 50 m, for example in the North Sea and the eastern Channel, but these beds are now mostly depleted.

57%

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. Recent examples include:

1. National legislation is in place in Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the UK;
2. Harvesting is regulated in Denmark and Norway;
3. Monitoring, mapping, and research activities are undertaken by Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK;
4. An MPA covers area of suitable habitat where natural oyster beds previously occurred;
5. Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and the UK have designated MPAs;
6. The UK has implemented fisheries measures and Belgium is progressing proposals;
7. Belgium, France, and the UK have on-going restoration programmes;
8. France, and the UK, have knowledge dissemination programmes.

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.

Condition

It is difficult to obtain a broad picture of the distribution of *O.edulis* and *O.edulis* beds in the OSPAR region and there is an uncertainty whether records of *Oedulis* and *O.edulis* beds refer to natural or cultivated beds or even artificial ones. *Ostrea edulis* is a long-lived species, however individual large specimens offshore or from deeper waters are rare. Areas where such specimens occur could serve as nuclei for further expansion or reestablishment of *O.edulis* beds in areas where they once thrived, provided that suitable habitat still exists and is not too degraded.



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References:

Background document for *Ostrea edulis* and *ostrea edulis* beds(OSPAR Publication 428)
OSPAR Recommendation 2013/04
OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)