

OSPAR Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic  
Meeting of the Biodiversity Committee  
Reykjavik (Iceland): 4-8 April 2022

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## Terms of Reference for the Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Coordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring in 2022/2023 (ICG-COBAM)

### Scope of ICG-COBAM's work

1. ICG-COBAM is responsible for the coordination of OSPAR's biodiversity assessment and monitoring work under the guidance of the Biodiversity Committee. The work of the group supports the *OSPAR Regional Plan to achieve adequacy and coherence of MSFD Implementation* which is currently being updated. It has a particular focus on JAMP Product B-10 and coordination for biodiversity aspects (Descriptors 1, 2, 4 and 6) of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). ICG-COBAM also takes account of progress on the implementation of Descriptor 3 on commercial fish and shellfish in its work.
2. The most important tasks of ICG-COBAM are:
  - a. to develop a set of operational biodiversity indicators with a clear recommendation for thresholds to be used in regional assessments (OSPAR JAMP for 2014-2021 product B-10), which meet the needs of all Contracting Parties, including those who are EU Member States for their implementation of the MSFD;
  - b. to use OSPAR biodiversity indicators to assess progress towards agreed NEAES objectives and as a contribution to the JAMP and the Quality Status Report 2023 (QSR 2023);
  - c. to identify gaps in methods and the coverage of biodiversity indicators, with respect to delivering tasks a. and b.

### Work for the 2022/23 meeting cycle

3. During the 2022/23 period, ICG-COBAM's activities will be focused on the delivery of indicator and thematic assessments of biodiversity to QSR2023, taking account of the OSPAR North East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 and requirements of OSPAR regional coordination in relation to European Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848 on criteria and methodological standards for good environmental status.

### **Indicator assessment and development**

- a. continue development of common indicators to be used for regional assessments and update those indicators which still lack thresholds proposals.
- b. establish and consolidate dataflows for each common indicator by putting in place protocols for data management, including quality assurance and quality control procedures;

- c. by BDC (2) 2022, complete data collation and undertake remaining agreed Common indicator assessments for delivery into the QSR 2023<sup>1</sup>;
- d. by BDC (2) 2022, develop and test Candidate indicators through the remaining agreed pilot assessments for delivery into the QSR 2023<sup>1</sup>;
- e. ensure data and analytical protocols used in the QSR2023 assessments are retained to ensure knowledge is transferred to future assessments;
- f. where required, deliver to BDC (2) 2022 updated CEMP guidelines and appendices for common indicators that have undergone revision during the QSR2023;
- g. update CEMP Appendix BB9 (BH3) outstanding fields. Review fields 18 and 19, ie. the list of Contracting Parties monitoring and providing data, for all CEMP appendices, and update as relevant.
- h. provide ICG-POSH with information from ICG-COBAM indicators to contribute to assessments of OSPAR threatened and declining habitats and species;
- i. develop a proposal for BDC 2023 on the appropriate frequency for updating of indicator assessments;
- j. develop a concept paper on the roles of the size-based fish community indicators (FC2, FC3, FW3, FW7) including discussions on the option of merging the indicators and, as relevant, present a proposal to BDC 2023.

#### ***Thematic assessments***

- k. to develop the integrated assessments of the state of biodiversity components and assessments of the impacts of human activities and pressures on biodiversity (including discussion of integration methods of species up to species groups and indicators);
- l. to collaborate with the Biodiversity Thematic Assessment Drafting Group (BiTA) in guiding the delivery of thematic assessments of biodiversity for QSR 2023 to BDC (2) 2022;

#### ***NEAES 2030 implementation plan***

- m. support BDC with the identification of tasks for any relevant operational objectives in the NEAES 2030 implementation plan and the development of task templates;

develop links between indicator development work and implementation of NEAES tasks (e.g. CIBRBINA task);

#### **Participants**

4. ICG-COBAM is open to all Contracting Parties and Observers, in accordance with the OSPAR Rules of Procedure. A list of Expert Group meetings and workshops during 2022/23 [will be added] as Annex A. During 2022/2023 the group will be co-convened by Ian Mitchell (UK) and Richard Emmerson (SE).

#### **Organisation of work**

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of common and candidate indicators to be included in the QSR 2023 in each region is in Annex 3 of the Summary Record of BDC 2021.

5. ICG-COBAM will work through correspondence and face-to-face meetings of ICG-COBAM and the expert groups. Indicator and contributions to thematic assessments will be delivered to the QSR2023 according to the timeline in Annex 3 of the Summary Record of ICG-COBAM 2020 (BDC 21/04/Info01).

6. ICG-COBAM will coordinate the work of its expert groups, maintaining an overview of resource requirements in relation to the planned work programme. The expert groups, their leads and workplans are as follows:

- a. Birds (JWGBIRD); Matt Parsons UK – see the agreed 3-yearworkplan 2021-2023 (Annex 1)
- b. Mammals Anita Gilles, Germany
- c. Fish Maurice Clarke (Ireland) .
- d. Non-indigenous species (JEGNIS); Peter Stæhr (Denmark) – see workplan in (Annex 2)
- e. Benthic habitats (OBHEG); Laurent Guérin (France); Cristina Vina-Herbon, UK
- f. Pelagic habitats; Abigail McQuatters-Gollop, UK
- g. Food webs; Ulrike Schückel (Germany) and Izaskun Preciado (Spain)

7. To ensure that ICG-COBAM is in a position to deliver its tasks, Contracting Parties are requested to: (i) support an active engagement in ICG-COBAM and the expert groups (expert dedicated time to contribute to work and resources to attend workshops and meetings), ii) to support experts work to develop monitoring and assessment methods that are to the benefit of all parties, and iii) to facilitate the required data flows for indicator development and QSR2023 assessments.

8. During 2022 and 2023, the engagement of some Contracting Parties' experts will be supported by the NEA-PANACEA project (see BDC 21/03/03), which is partly funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. This project will contribute to the delivery of indicator assessments and thematic assessments of pelagic habitats, benthic habitats, marine birds and foodwebs. Some members of ICG-COBAM, including expert group leads are involved in the project. ICG-COBAM will collaborate with NEA-PANACEA to guide and deliver the assessment products so that they meet the needs of all relevant Contracting Parties.

6. One face-to-face meeting of ICG-COBAM is anticipated in the period between BDC (1) 2022 and BDC (2) 2022 in [tbc 7-9] November 2022 [host needed]. In addition to the meeting of ICG-COBAM there will be the face-to-face expert group meetings. In addition, the NEA PANACEA is planning an expert workshop ('UltraCOBAM'), to be held in The Netherlands in 14-16 June 2022. UltraCOBAM is intended to support the delivery of the ICG-COBAM biodiversity thematic assessments for the QSR2023. All the COBAM expert group leads will be invited to UltraCOBAM (including those not involved in NEA PANACEA). The UltraCOBAM workshop is an opportunity for expert groups to convene and to discuss cross-cutting issues around the production of indicator assessments and thematic assessments.

7. ICG-COBAM will report to BDC 2023 and, where necessary, to CoG on the progress of its work. As required, ICG-COBAM will be represented at meetings of ICG-MSFD, ICG-QSR, ICG-EcoC, ICG-POSH and the Biodiversity Thematic Assessment group (BiTA). ICG-COBAM will engage, as relevant, with related activities under EU processes, other Regional Sea Conventions, ICES, and nationally.

8. ICG-COBAM will continue to collaborate with BiTA, ICG-EcoC and EIHA on the delivery of data products of relevance for the biodiversity indicators and QSR2023 thematic assessments. ICG-EcoC have been invited to engage with expert groups as relevant.

9. Drafts of all assessments feeding into the QSR 2023 are to be held and shared through the QSR 2023 SharePoint site and relevant sub-folders. Other intersessional work by COBAM and the expert groups will be

facilitated by use of the [COBAM sharepoint](#). Separate additional subfolders will be used to facilitate the work of the expert groups.

### ***Communication with other international processes***

- a. work with representatives of other European Regional Seas Conventions (i.e. Helsinki Convention, Bucharest Convention and Barcelona Convention) and their secretariats, organisations and projects to share knowledge and realise opportunities for cooperation or coordinated/joint works.
- b. communicate with ICES, via the respective secretariats, with the aim to identify ongoing work that could contribute to the ICG-COBAM work programme to maximise synergies and avoid duplication.

### **Memorandum**

**Given the need to focus upon delivery to the QSR 2023 it is not proposed to focus on the following task until 2023 at the earliest. This will be kept under review and be reviewed at the latest by BDC 2023.**

- a. develop (sub)regional monitoring jointly between Contracting Parties, or more integrated approaches to monitoring as set out in OSPAR JAMP 2014-2021 product B-10;

## Annex A

### ICG-COBAM Expert Group meetings and workshops during period from BDC (1) 2022 to BDC 2023

(as far as can be foreseen, to be updated when new information becomes available)

Meeting	Date	Location
BDC (1) 2022	4-8 April 2022	Reykjavik
	Ongoing virtual meeting on QSR & NEA PANACEA	Online
Hybrid BH3/BH4	April (final date tbc)	UK/Germany tbc
Pelagic, Benthic and Food webs colleagues	25-27 May 2022 14-16 June 2022 – as part of UltraCOBAM	Madrid The Netherlands Online
Fish Expert Group	May/June	
NEA PANACEA JWG BIRD Plus workshop - with marine bird experts across Europe's regional seas	17-19 May	Aberdeen (tbc)
UltraCOBAM (organized by NEA-PANACEA)	14-16 June 2022	The Netherlands
NEA PANACEA Pelagics	Monthly meetings	Web
OSPAR Marine Mammal Expert Group	Meetings every three months	To be confirmed
Fish Expert Group	Sept/Oct	
OSPAR/ICES/HELCOM JWGBIRD	Autumn 2022	To be confirmed
OSPAR/HELCOM JEG NIS	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
ICG-COBAM 2022	[7-9 November 2022]	To be confirmed
BDC (2) 2022	[12-15 December 2022]	To be confirmed
BDC 2023	Spring 2023	To be confirmed

# OSPAR-HELCOM-ICES Joint Working Group on Marine Birds (JWGBIRD)

## Work programme 2021-2023

### JWGBIRD work themes

This work programme provides a thematic overview of the work carried out by JWGBIRD. Tasks under each theme are listed in Annex 1 and will be updated on an annual basis.

The aim of describing a three-year work programme is to facilitate the sign-off process that follows different annual schedules for OSPAR, HELCOM and ICES. The aim is also to enable long-term planning and delivery of significant products that may require several components to be developed during consecutive years.

#### 1. Database and data products

This work theme encourages JWGBIRD to move towards a more transparent way of working with data and assessments (i.e. TAF, transparent assessment framework) and enables JWGBIRD to produce seamless cross-regional data products.

Work under this theme includes:

- a. Definition of appropriate, and whenever possible, compatible formats for data submissions and storage,
- b. resolving data issues associated with the database and/or specific datasets,
- c. providing checks for re-submissions to the databases,
- d. developing data products for assessments, advice and public use
- e. specifying technical aspects of how to make data stream processes operational, e.g. to automate delivery of indicator assessments through scripts.

JWGBIRD will provide input to the ICES Data Centre that hosts the biodiversity portal containing the *OSPAR seabird database*. The database contains data on breeding numbers and productivity of seabird and waterbird species collected at breeding sites across the OSPAR Area. It also contains data on numbers of wintering and passage waterbirds (incl. waders) from coasts and estuaries, which are counted mostly from land and in some cases, from the air. These data will be used to construct regional indicators, baselines and thresholds to assess OSPAR's common indicators on B1 – marine bird abundance and B3 – Marine bird productivity. The OSPAR seabird database could be expanded to cover the Baltic Sea, and become a cross-regional database. JWGBIRD will explore the possibility of including data on numbers of breeding and wintering waterbirds and seabirds in the Baltic. HELCOM Biodiversity Database hosts data for all species relevant for the Baltic Sea region and, where possible, automated harvesting between the two databases should be explored

JWGBIRD will oversee the *European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database*, which is the only current cross-regional data product considered by the group. The database is in the process of being migrated to ICES at the beginning of the JWGBIRD work programme. ICES Data Centre together with JWGBIRD experts are preparing to take over the hosting, maintenance and development from the previous hosts. The ESAS database work will be further steered by the dedicated ESAS subgroup of JWGBIRD. The ESAS database covers the entire ICES area and includes 'at-sea' data. The data can be used for ICES advisory products and for OSPAR and HELCOM assessments.

To support the work on migrating birds under the auspice of JWGBIRD there is a need to establish functioning dataflows and agreed data hosting for *data specific for migration*, such as telemetry and tracking data, migration count data etc. For this purpose, existing options should be identified and their suitability for the needs of the group explored.

## 2. **Monitoring**

Work under this theme includes:

- f. Providing a forum for discussion of monitoring programmes, focusing on the development of joint or coordinated monitoring e.g. at-sea protocols, and contributing to ICES advisory products regarding monitoring practices and programmes as appropriate.
- g. Providing updates to OSPAR CEMP guidelines and appendices<sup>1</sup>, HELCOM monitoring programmes and guidelines when required.
- h. Providing expert opinion on the development and implementation of new monitoring strategies and guidelines for birds, e.g. in relation to threatened and declining species, bycatch, wintering birds, migration routes and distribution.

## 3. **Assessments**

Work under this theme includes:

- i. Ensure information flow with regular communication to all three convention secretariats on policy development relevant to JWGBIRD and/or general bird related issues.
- j. Providing updates of indicators for the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2023 (QSR 2023) and for the HELCOM HOLAS III
- k. Developing further, existing Common and Candidate Indicators and/or develop new indicators, where a need has been identified by one or more of the Conventions, including requirements concerning the criteria addressed in MSFD assessments to be conducted by Member States of the European Union.
- l. Developing integration methods and other aspects of indicator assessment, which require further development to be in line with MSFD assessment requirements under the revised Commission Decision (2017/848).
- m. Deliver a Thematic Assessment of marine birds for the OSPAR QSR 2023, which includes an integrated assessment of status of species and species groups, an assessment of pressure impacts and on the effectiveness of current measures.
- n. Carrying out other assessments, including for example assessments of threatened and declining species, biogeographic analysis and ecosystem overviews.
- o. Contributing bird-related information to assessments carried out by other relevant groups, e.g. on issues such as incidental bycatch or food-webs.

## 4. **Ad hoc expert consultation**

Responding, as needed, to queries from the parent organisations and their respective subsidiary bodies relating to bird issues by providing expert opinions.

## 5. **Provision of expert input to ICES advisory process**

Provide expert input to advice requests in ICES including the ecosystem and fisheries overviews. Such input would be peer reviewed and quality assured, before ICES advice is published.

Ways of working.

### **JWGBIRD annual meetings**

To date much of the work of JWGBIRD has been concentrated around the annual meetings. These usually take place in either October or November and should, when possible, be timed to ensure delivery of products into the respective parent organisation's processes. Annual meetings can be held online if required by public health issues.

Where project resources are available, specific actions carried out by JWGBIRD can be resourced through projects, for example co-financed projects. This might have implications for the timing of completing actions in specific years or months. Whenever a project resourced activity is planned, JWGBIRD will communicate

details on the planning to OSPAR, HELCOM and ICES well in advance of the activity to enable dissemination of the information to all possibly concerned parties.

An additional meeting is planned in Spring 2022 as part of the NEA-PANACEA project (details below). This extra meeting, called 'JWGBIRD-PLUS' will be extended to seabird experts from the Mediterranean and Black Sea, in order to promote dialogue and cooperation across the four European regions.

#### **Sub-group working**

Sub-groups may be defined in order to work more thematically, especially where it is foreseen that completing the task would require substantive work which might stretch across several meeting cycles.

Task descriptions should be developed for each sub-group individually.

At present, work related to European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database is carried out by the ESAS subgroup of the JWGBIRD. In addition, the need to establish a designated subgroup focusing on bird migration has been identified and supported.

#### **Intersessional work**

JWGBIRD may be asked for expert opinion and/or intersessional work at short notice. These requests may not always be directly related to the environmental programmes of the conventions, but may be relevant to other international processes and policies. When such actions are requested of JWGBIRD the group will keep OSPAR, HELCOM and ICES respectively informed of ongoing actions. Expert opinion may be required at more frequent intervals than annual, and the annual meeting cycle and reporting format of the group may not necessarily be the most appropriate forum in which to deal with such requests (e.g. due to mismatched deadlines). Correspondence and intersessional work between relevant group members should be used to provide a timely delivery of required outputs. Contracting Parties of the various conventions will need to be made aware of the resources (i.e. time of experts) that will be required for all aspects of the Group's work.

#### **Delivery of results**

The JWGBIRD annual report includes products under each work theme that are specific to the annual list of tasks required of the group. Products developed and delivered intersessionally shall be appended to the report. The report is co-authored by the three organisations.

The group, or a co-chair as a representative of the group, can deliver communications or short expert opinions when required at short notice and independent of the annual timing of the JWGBIRD meeting. If possible, such responses should be summarised in the annual report.

The group should also aim, where possible and appropriate, to submit some products for publication in scientific journals or to be presented at conferences.

At the end of the three-year period covered by this work programme, the group shall present an overview of the products delivered. The overview should detail the products delivered under each of the themes outlined above. The overview will feed into an ICES, peer review and advice process as relevant.

#### **Group membership**

Membership of JWGBIRD is obtained by experts seeking nomination from their national delegations to either ICES, OSPAR or HELCOM. It is important that all members of JWGBIRD have a firm connection to their national delegations.

The JWGBIRD co-chairs can also invite non-members to attend the annual meeting or to take part in intersessional work. Invited experts should demonstrate particular skills that are relevant to the delivery of a specific request. A list of members and their affiliations is available on the JWGBIRD web pages ([link](#)) and is updated annually.

The group is open to connect with other relevant bird groups and networks, for example groups working in the Arctic region and/or non-governmental organizations.

This group is led by three co-chairs representing each of the conventions. There is currently no limit on the length of tenure of each co-chair.<sup>2</sup> This arrangement should be reviewed by members on an annual basis. The arrangements of the relevant sponsoring convention for each chair should be followed if a chair is to be replaced.

### **Convention specificities**

#### **OSPAR**

JWGBIRD reports to OSPAR's Biological Diversity Committee (OSPAR BDC) via the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Co-ordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring (ICG-COBAM). There is



also a need for JWGBIRD to collaborate with national leads to deliver actions on OSPAR's Threatened and Declining bird species via ICG-POSH (Protected Species and Habitats) which is also under OSPAR BDC. Key OSPAR work areas for JWGBIRD during 2021-2023 will centre around delivery of the Quality Status Report 2023. This includes the updated assessment of common indicators, pilot assessments of candidate indicators and an integrated Thematic Assessment of marine birds (see Table 1 and annex 1).

**Table 1:** Indicators assessments to be delivered by JWGBIRD for the OSPAR QSR 2023

Indicator name	Type	Lead	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV	Region V
B1 - Marine bird abundance	Common	Ian Mitchell (UK), Volker Dierschke (DE)	<i>update (R1 data in IA2017)</i>	<i>Update plus at-sea data pilot</i>	<i>update</i>	<i>new</i>	
B 3 - Marine bird breeding success	Common	Ian Mitchell (UK), Volker Dierschke (DE)	<i>update (R1 data in IA2017)</i>	<i>update</i>	<i>update</i>	<i>new</i>	
B5 - Marine bird bycatch	Candidate	Volker Dierschke (DE), Signe Christensen-Dalsgaard (NO), Sven Koschinski (DE)	<i>Pilot</i>	<i>Pilot</i>	<i>Pilot</i>	<i>Pilot<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>Pilot<sup>2</sup></i>
B7 - Marine bird habitat quality	Candidate	Volker Dierschke (DE)		<i>Pilot</i>			

Some outputs for the OSPAR QSR2023 will be delivered through a project partly funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) – NEA-PANACEA (North East Atlantic Project on biodiversity and eutrophication assessment integration and creation of effective measures). The work on marine birds under NEA-PANACEA will be led by Ian Mitchell and Volker Dierschke (co-chairs of JWGBIRD at the beginning of the work programme) and will aim to deliver an assessment of the OSPAR Common Indicator B3 – marine bird productivity and a Thematic Assessment of marine birds for the OSPAR QSR2023. As part of the wider delivery of NEA-PANACEA, OSPAR-nominated members of JWGBIRD will be invited to join members of the other OSPAR biodiversity expert groups at the SUPER-COBAM meeting in October 2021. SUPER-COBAM will address common issues being faced by the different expert groups in delivering indicator assessments and thematic assessments for the OSPAR QSR 2023.

OSPAR has identified a need to prioritise work on measures and actions to improve the status of seabirds to enable their recovery. JWGBIRD will be involved in developing this work in the period covered by this work programme.

#### HELCOM

JWGBIRD reports to the HELCOM State and Conservation working group. JWGBIRD is required to collaborate, as needed, with national leads and co-leads of HELCOM indicators related to seabirds and with national leads of HELCOM recommendations, including but not limited to:

Recommendation 34E-1 'Safeguarding important bird habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea', and

Recommendation 37-2 'Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM red list'.

The group can also work on other HELCOM projects that support the commitments mentioned above.

Key HELCOM work areas for JWGBIRD during 2021-2023 will be the preparation and delivery of bird assessments for the next holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III, see Table 2). One bird indicator addressing bird and mammal bycatch in fishing gear is partly funded by EMFF in the project HELCOM BLUES (HELCOM biodiversity, litter, underwater noise and effective regional measures for the Baltic Sea).

**Table 2:** Indicators assessments to be delivered by JWGBIRD for HELCOM HOLAS III

Indicator name	Type	Lead	Region V
Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear	Core	Sven Koschinski (DE), Volker Dierschke (DE),	<i>update</i>
Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season	Core	Volker Dierschke (DE), Fredrik Haas (SE)	<i>update</i>

Abundance of waterbirds in the wintering season	Core	Volker Dierschke (DE), Fredrik Haas (SE)	<i>update</i> ?
Waterbird habitat quality	Candidate	Volker Dierschke (DE)	<i>pilot</i>

## ICES

JWGBIRD reports at present to ICES ACOM. The group's task list will be reviewed annually by both ICES ACOM and SCICOM, but substantive comments will only be taken in relation to issues that are helping delivery of the ICES strategy, or require knowledge creation/synthesis to respond to the advice request by ICES. At present such work includes:

- Development of an ICES region wide (i.e. across HELCOM/OSPAR) set of operational indicators in line with the [Transparent Assessment Framework](#) TAF and follow [FAIR](#) (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) data principles.
- Assessment of effects of anthropogenic activities on marine birds other than incidental bycatch / fisheries).
- Assemble bird bycatch data and qualitative information from other sources not covered by ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) (incl. strandings, entanglement, interviews, research projects, national/local monitoring).
- Determine and further advance methods to assess the resilience of protected bird species to bycatch, and make these available to WGBYC. Provide input to ICES advisory products.

The bycatch-relevant work of JWGBIRD will be according to the [ICES roadmap for bycatch advice](#). Contribution to advice will follow the [Guide to ICES advisory framework and principles](#).

## *Annex 2. JEG NIS 3-year work programme*

### **ToR and 3-year Work Programme of the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM Working Group on Non-Indigenous Species (JWGNIS) for 2021-2024**

*This is a proposal for the establishment of a joint OSPAR/HELCOM working group on Non-Indigenous Species (JWGNIS) with a 3-year work programme. The proposal has been drafted by national experts working in the OSPAR NISEG and NIS experts working in the HELCOM region, supported by their respective secretariats. Membership of JWGNIS shall be obtained by experts seeking nomination from their national delegations to either OSPAR or HELCOM. It is important that all members have a firm connection to their national delegations. The work programme will be presented for adoption during 2021 to the relevant bodies of OSPAR and HELCOM.*

#### ***Background***

The OSPAR/HELCOM Joint Working Group on Non-Indigenous Species (JWGNIS) is proposed to be established in 2021, through merging the existing OSPAR Expert Group on NIS and HELCOM experts.

This group is to be led by two co-convenors representing the two conventions: the OSPAR co-convenor is Peter Staehr (DK) and the HELCOM co-convenor is [N.N (CP)]. The co-chairs ensure that the joint group's activities meet the needs of each of the respective conventions. Experts will be encouraged to work on issues across conventions, as the work benefits from the wider expertise of all expert members and the exchange of knowledge and information across conventions. The group will be composed of experts from a wide range of backgrounds including government bodies and academic institutions. This will ensure a mix of applied and theoretical scientific expertise to support robust outputs relevant to NIS assessment and management.

Members will be encouraged to participate as much as possible in all the groups' activities. The joint group will be able to provide analysis and interpretation of the results of the OSPAR and HELCOM indicator assessments, providing thereby a large-spatial scale perspective.

These Terms of Reference (ToRs) and 3-year work programme cover a period of intense work in OSPAR and HELCOM with the delivery of the QSR - 2023 and HOLAS III 2022-2023, respectively. The JWG NIS will be responsible for delivering the common indicator assessment for newly arrived NIS and a data product for the distribution and abundance of NIS. Additionally, the group will deliver the thematic assessments for NIS, in particular relating to activities, pressures, status and impacts stemming from NIS.

#### ***JWGNIS work themes***

These ToR and work programme provide a thematic overview of the work that is to be carried out by JWGNIS, in cooperation with JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING<sup>2</sup>, Joint ICES/IOC/IMO Working Group on Ballast and Other Ship Vectors (WGBOSV) and the ICES Working Group on Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms (WG ITMO) as well as with relevant EU-level work on D2 of MSFD. Tasks under each theme will be specified on an annual basis.

The aim of describing a three-year ToRs and work programme is to facilitate the sign-off process that follows different annual schedules for OSPAR and HELCOM. This will also enable long-term planning and delivery of significant outputs that may require development of components over consecutive years, such as support of assessments for QSR-2023 and HOLAS III 2022-2023.

#### **1) Data and Database**

JWGNIS will support the development of data formats and contribute, as needed, to the development of the required links among existing databases, in order to facilitate assessment of new introductions and impacts of NIS, as well as the success of possible management measures.

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<sup>2</sup> JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING is a joint HELCOM-OSPAR expert group with a remit on preventing introduction of non-indigenous species through ship ballast water and hull fouling. The Terms of Reference of the group are regularly reviewed by the OSPAR EIHA Committee and HELCOM Maritime.

## *OSPAR*

Under OSPAR there is no agreed data-arrangements for NIS. A one-off data call has been issued for QSR 2023 purposes. Previous work of the OSPAR NIS EG have identified AquaNIS and JRC EASIN as possible solutions for long-term data storage and processing through a centralised approach. AquaNIS has been indicated, as the preferred option by OSPAR BDC, noting that annual inputs to the database are secured and quality assured by ICES.

## *HELCOM*

HELCOM NIS monitoring programme currently utilizes AquaNIS database, complemented by data from other coordinated monitoring, as the data source for the HELCOM assessments. A web service is under development which will link the ICES Biological community database to the Decision Support Tool in the Joint Harmonised Procedure, which is already linked with AquaNIS, thus enabling harvesting of NIS observations reported to ICES as part of HELCOM COMBINE as well as NIS observations reported to AquaNIS.

Work under this theme includes:

- a) providing proposals for improving and harmonizing formats for data submissions under both conventions,
- b) identifying data issues associated with the databases and/or specific datasets,
- c) prepare data sets for assessments according to the quality requirements and make them available in accordance with data use and access policy,
- d) specifying technical aspects of how to make data stream processes operational, e.g. automating delivery of indicator assessments through scripts.

## **2) Monitoring**

Work under this theme includes:

- e) providing a forum for discussion of monitoring programmes, focusing on developing joint or coordinated monitoring where possible,
- f) providing updates to OSPAR CEMP guidelines and appendices, HELCOM monitoring programmes and guidelines when required,
- g) providing expert opinion on the development and implementation of new monitoring strategies and guidelines for NIS,

## **3) Assessments**

Work under this theme includes:

- h) ensuring information flow with regular communication to both convention secretariats relevant to JWG NIS and/or general NIS related issues,
- i) providing updates of indicators to be delivered regularly, frequency to be decided with the priority to deliver assessments for the QSR-2023 and HOLAS III, including thematic assessments,
- j) further developing the candidate indicators and/or developing new indicators, where a need has been identified by the Conventions or by MSFD (D2) at the EU level,
- k) developing integration methods and other aspects of indicator assessment, which require further development to be in line with EU MSFD assessment requirements according to COM DEC 848/2017,
- l) contributing NIS related information to assessments carried out by other relevant groups.

## **4) Ad hoc expert consultation**

Responding as needed to queries from the parent organisations and their respective subsidiary bodies, such as JTG BALLAST & BIOFOULING, relating to NIS issues by providing input or expert opinions.

## ***Ways of working***

### **JWGNIS annual meetings**

Annual meetings shall be organised and should be timed, where possible, to immediately precede a relevant convention meeting to ensure delivery of inputs to ongoing work in the respective parent organisation. The format for the meetings will consist of one physical meeting followed by an online meeting. The responsibility for preparing and organising the meeting is with the co-convenors.

### **Intersessional work**

JWGNIS may be asked for expert opinion to be delivered based on intersessional work (i.e. at more frequent intervals than outlined in the workplan or which are not aligned with the timetable of the annual meeting). Therefore, the annual meeting cycle and reporting format of the group may not necessarily be the most appropriate forum in which to deal with such requests (e.g. due to mismatched deadlines).

Correspondence and intersessional work between relevant group members should be used to provide a timely delivery of required outputs.

### ***Delivery of results***

Progress updates are to be provided regularly. For OSPAR, progress updates are to be provided by the lead to ICG-COBAM, and for HELCOM to State & Conservation Working Group. Deliverables developed and submitted intersessionally shall be appended to the progress report of this group.

The group, or a co-chair as a representative of the group, can deliver communications or expert opinions when required (including at short notice, if possible) and independent of the annual timing of the JWGNIS meeting. If possible, such responses should be summarised in the annual report.

### ***Group membership***

Membership of JWGNIS is obtained by experts seeking nomination from their national delegations to either OSPAR or HELCOM.

The JWGNIS co-chairs, if substantiated, can also invite non-members to attend the annual meeting or to take part in intersessional work. Invited experts should demonstrate particular skills that are relevant to the delivery of a specific request. A list of members and their affiliations is available on the JWGNIS webpage and is updated annually.

The group is open to connect with other relevant groups and networks.

This group is led by two co-chairs representing both conventions. There is currently no limit on the length of tenure of each co-chair. This arrangement should be reviewed by members on an annual basis.

### ***Convention specifics***

#### **OSPAR**

JWGNIS reports to OSPAR's Biological Diversity Committee (OSPAR BDC) via the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Co-ordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring (ICG-COBAM). There is also a need for JWGNIS to collaborate with national leads to deliver actions on OSPAR's Environmental Impacts of Human Activities (EIHA) Committee, via ICG-POSH.

#### **HELCOM**

JWGNIS will report to the HELCOM State and Conservation working group. JWGNIS will be required to collaborate, as needed, with national leads and co-leads of HELCOM indicators related to NIS and with national leads of HELCOM recommendations.

The group may also work on other HELCOM projects that support the commitments mentioned above.