

OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
Meeting of the Biodiversity Committee (BDC)

Videoconference: 30 September – 2 October 2020

2020-2023 Terms of Reference for the Biodiversity Thematic Assessment Drafting Group (BiTA)

Context

1. BiTA is responsible for coordinating the production of the biodiversity thematic assessment(s) as a component of the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2023 (QSR 2023). BiTA will coordinate the production of state and impact components by the expert groups. It will also draft other components of the biodiversity thematic assessments and will be responsible for bringing together all components into one or several thematic assessments on biodiversity.
2. When considering the delivery of biodiversity thematic assessments for QSR 2023 BiTA will be guided by the 'QSR 2023 guidance document' (Agreement 2019-02) and other QSR 2023 resources published on the [QSR 2023 website](#).
3. These Terms of Reference (ToR) are for the period 2020 – 2023; BDC will review these ToR and adapt them if relevant.

Concept

4. QSR 2023 will provide an environmental assessment of the status of the marine environment of the OSPAR maritime area. QSR 2023 will also identify gaps and priorities for improvement of the status of the marine environment and provide recommendations for actions and measures to fill these gaps and achieve OSPAR's objectives as detailed in the NEAES 2020-2030.
5. QSR 2023 thematic assessments aim to synthesise and interpret information from technical indicator and other assessments and bring out the most important conclusions to feed into the QSR synthesis report. Thematic assessments are intended for an expert audience.
6. BDC is responsible for the overall delivery of the thematic assessment(s) of biodiversity. Assessing the status of biodiversity is the foundation for applying the ecosystem approach in OSPAR. The assessment needs to cover the many aspects of biodiversity and deliver assessment outputs that are relevant to the QSR and can inform management decisions.
7. For this purpose and overall coherence, strong interactions and cross-cutting works will have to be done with other (thematic) assessment such as those planned for anthropogenic pressures and activities, climate change and ocean acidification. This should include notably mutual reviews of progress and products all along the process.

Tasks

8. BiTA will be responsible for guiding and bringing together the various building blocks for biodiversity thematic assessment. It will also draft specific components of the assessments.
9. BiTA drafting tasks are:
 - a. Executive Summary
 - b. Response/measures
10. BiTA will have the mandate to guide the POSH/COBAM expert groups in delivering building blocks on Status and Impact avoiding duplications (e.g. excluding integrations rules between indicators). BiTA's first task will be to work with COBAM to develop guidance to expert groups on the content and structure of these building blocks by March 2021.
11. BiTA, tasks in identifying and hyperlinking relevant information are;
 - a. Drivers
 - b. Human Activities
 - c. Welfare
12. BiTA will be mandated to consider and bring together all components and prepare the complete thematic assessments of biodiversity.

Organisation and participants:

13. BiTA will report to BDC, and provide regular reports to BDC HODs.
14. BiTA will be convened by N.N (CP?). Participation is open to all Contracting Parties and Observers in accordance with the OSPAR Rules of Procedure.
15. The Convenors of ICG-MPA, ICG-POSH and ICG-COBAM are members of BiTA In addition expert nominations from Contracting Parties are invited. All Contracting Parties are encouraged to engage in the BiTA and it will be important to achieve a balanced representation from the OSPAR Regions and the different biodiversity themes. The list of participants is at Annex 1.
16. The new QSR Co-ordinator from the Secretariat will also participate in BiTA work to ensure its approaches and outputs are consistent with the thematic assessments under other committees.
17. Members of BiTA will have an understanding of the evidence requirements of the main customers for the QSR thematic assessments. Group members should be prepared to take on /sharing in drafting and guiding responsibilities. The Convenor should work actively to ensure that work is shared equitably amongst the group members.
18. BiTA will need to coordinate with ICG-QSR and ICG-EcoC around the production and content of the thematic assessments and notably on the inclusion of the bow-tie approach to Cumulative Assessment. It will also be important to coordinate with developing work under TG-MAP on considering the effectiveness of measures on the marine environment.

Working arrangements

19. BiTA will work through correspondence, making use of appropriate electronic communication means and hold face-to-face meetings as relevant to ensure timely delivery biodiversity assessment to QSR 2023.

20. It is anticipated that there will be 1 or 2 face-to-face meetings, when the final compilation and drafting of the thematic assessments will be carried out.

21. Drafting will be carried out using Sharepoint to manage versions of the various component drafts.

Delivery

1. by BDC 2022 (march/April 2022) – Draft building blocks (state, pressures/impacts, response measures) for all ecosystem elements and proposals on how the thematic assessment will be structured

2. by BDC 2023 – final thematic assessment(s) in the format agreed by BDC 2021.

Table 1. Building blocks of the Biodiversity thematic assessments and the groups responsible for delivery.

Building Block	Content	Who	Source info
Executive summary	1. Identify the problems? Are they the same in all OSPAR regions? 2. What has been done? 3. Did it work? 4. How does this field affect the overall quality status? 5. What do we do next?	Biodiversity Thematic Assessment Drafting Group (BiTA)	
DRIVERS	Linking information on socio-economic drivers, macro trends (e.g. demographics)	ICG-ESA/EIHA (BiTA to decide on linking information)	Thematic assessment on Human activities (B14 assessment)
HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND PRESSURES	Linking information on relevant human activities and pressures	EIHA (B14 work) (BiTA to decide on linking information)	Feeder reports (B14)
Integrated assessment of STATE	The status of species groups and predominant and special habitats will be assessed through integrated assessment of indicator results where available. (This are equivalent to sub-regional assessments of GES under Art 8 of MSFD).	COBAM/POSH Expert groups POSH assessment leads for Reptiles	Indicator assessments Assessments of threatened and declining species & habitats Third party assessments
IMPACTS of human activities and pressures on biodiversity	What do the biodiversity status assessments tell us and not tell us about impacts? Also include a summary of the known impacts of climate change and how these may interact with impacts from other pressures	COBAM/POSH Expert groups ICG-EcoC	Indicator assessments Assessments of threatened and declining species & habitats

			Third party assessments
Management RESPONSE: Measures	Description of what is in place and how effectiveness these management measures are: are they sufficient for achieving the objectives for biodiversity in the NEAES 2020 – 2030?	BiTA with input from others – see below	
MPAs	Extent of MPA coverage and degree of implementation	ICG-MPA	ICG-MPA Biennial status report
OSPAR measures	Very brief summary of OSPAR Measures in place to reduce impacts in each region, concerning Non-indigenous species, Underwater noise, Nutrient and organic enrichment, Hazardous substances, Radioactive substances, Litter and Oil & gas. OR simply signpost to the relevant thematic assessments.	BiTA with input from relevant ICGs under HASEC, EIHA, OIC possibly coordinated through TG-MAP	POSH overview assessment of implementation HASEC, OIC, EIHA thematic assessments
Other measures	Other measures in each region to address impacts from non-OSPAR pressures such as from fishing and offshore renewables.	B14 Assessment team	Thematic assessment on Human activities (B14 assessment)
WELFARE	Consequences (welfare) Ecosystem services, Goods and benefits	EcoC/BiTA	

