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## Loss of biodiversity, pollution, and climate change continue to affect the North-East Atlantic

Today the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) published its latest assessment of the health of the North-East Atlantic. The report shows:

- **declining biodiversity and continued habitat degradation** across many parts of the OSPAR Maritime Area despite the measures taken by OSPAR Contracting Parties. The impacts of fisheries and other human activities on biodiversity are still deeply felt, and other forms of degradation such as noise pollution are of growing concern.
- there is an **ever-more pressing need to address drivers of degradation and biodiversity loss** and thereby increase the health and resilience of marine ecosystems in the OSPAR Maritime Area.
- **environmental quality has improved in some aspects**: releases of the most serious hazardous substances such as PCBs, PAHs, and organochlorides have decreased substantially, pollution by radioactive substances has been prevented, discharges by the oil and gas industry have been reduced, marine litter is better tracked and significant steps have been taken to reduce it, and a gradual reduction of the input and availability of excess nutrients has been witnessed in many OSPAR Regions.
- **climate change and ocean acidification are now driving major changes** that imperil much of the North-East Atlantic's marine biodiversity.

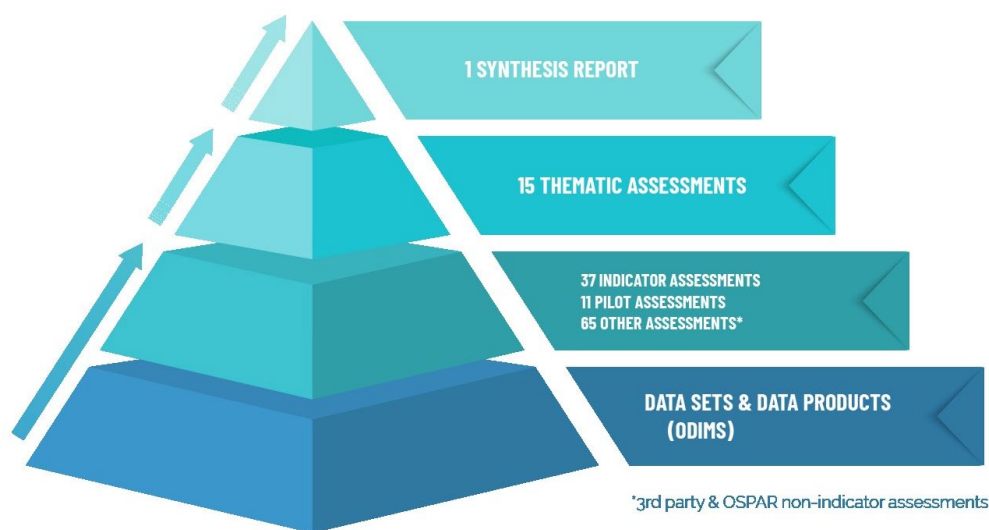
The Quality Status Report (QSR) 2023 is the most authoritative assessment of the whole North-East Atlantic and reflects the collective work of the 16 Contracting Parties to the OSPAR Convention, scientists, experts and their institutions, and the OSPAR Secretariat. It assesses the status of various components of the North-East Atlantic and examines how conditions have changed since the last QSR in 2010. The OSPAR Contracting Parties have progressively invested in more sophisticated monitoring and analysis of changes to the North-East Atlantic, both to support science-based decision making and to move towards a better understanding of the effectiveness of management and policy responses. The resulting QSR 2023 is a holistic assessment of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic produced in collaboration with over 400 scientists and policy experts from across the region, providing a foundation for effective science-based policy.

Publication of the QSR was announced at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Annual Science Conference 2023 at Palacio Euskalduna in Bilbao (Spain).

The findings from the QSR 2023 will be used to help OSPAR deliver its North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 – our shared Roadmap to achieving our vision of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic Ocean, which is productive, used sustainably and resilient to climate change and ocean acidification.

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## Note for editors



1. The key findings of the QSR 2023 show that: Climate change and ocean acidification are drivers of major change; Despite improvements in some fish populations, many are not in good status; Marine birds are still in trouble; Many marine mammals remain at risk, even while some species are recovering; Negative impacts from oil and gas activities continue to decrease; Marine litter levels remain high despite signs of improvement; Pollution by radioactive substances has been prevented; Hazardous substances are cause for concern; Noise pollution remains a threat; Introductions of new non-indigenous species (NIS) appear to have decreased; Benthic habitats continue to be damaged; Plankton, the base of the marine food web, are impacted in pelagic habitats; We know relatively little about the status of marine turtles; The state of marine food webs is of great concern; Eutrophication persists <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/quality-status-reports/qsr-2023/synthesis-report/key-messages/>
2. Supporting communications products including a summary of the key findings, briefing notes, presentations and translated texts are available for use here <https://trello.com/b/jbRYBCCR/ospars-quality-status-report-2023-communications>
3. The full Quality Status Report can be read here <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/quality-status-reports/qsr-2023/> The QSR comprises a synthesis report and 15 thematic assessments that are underpinned by 120 assessments and their underlying datasets. All of the data, methodologies and content are published under a CC-BY Creative Commons license and can be shared, replicated and adapted.
4. The OSPAR Commission was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and updated the 1972 Oslo and 1974 Paris Conventions. It brings together the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, together with the European Union.
5. In 2021, OSPAR Contracting Party ministers and the European Commission's Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries agreed an ambitious new North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) that sets out OSPAR's strategic and operational objectives for the period until the end of 2030. It describes how OSPAR will tackle the triple challenge facing the ocean: biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change. Its implementation is part of OSPAR's contribution towards achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and the targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Implementation of the OSPAR Strategy will address many of the issues highlighted in the QSR 2023. The evidence presented in the QSR 2023 will be used to inform a review of the Strategy in 2025 and to update it where necessary. Full text <https://www.ospar.org/convention/strategy>