
OSPAR GUIDANCE ON OTHER EFFECTIVE AREA BASED CONSERVATION MEASURES (OECMS)

Why is this important?

The identification and recognition of Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) will play an important role in recognising the contribution made by management measures in the wider environment outside of Marine Protected Areas to the conservation of marine habitats and species. OECMs will also contribute to OSPAR's progress towards its target of protecting 30% of the OSPAR Maritime Area by 2030, in line with global targets.

What is OSPAR doing?

The OSPAR guidance on applying OECMs is grounded in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) definition, identification criteria and processes for recognising OECMs, and provides additional detail on applying the criteria in the context of the north-east Atlantic. This is designed to underpin a consistent and coherent regional approach to identifying, recognising and reporting OECMs in the north-east Atlantic.

How will this benefit the North-East Atlantic?

A more complete picture of the area-based measures in place in the North-East Atlantic will help OSPAR Contracting Parties better map the biodiversity protections in place, help to identify gaps and support work towards a network that is representative, ecologically coherent and effectively managed.

Although the concept of OECMs was first introduced in 2010 and formally defined by the CBD in 2018, up to now very few OECMs have been reported to the OSPAR network. One of the barriers identified as preventing the wider uptake of OECMs in the North-East Atlantic was uncertainty regarding how to apply the various identification criteria and how to bring OECM proposals forward for formal recognition.

A comprehensive, shared understanding of OECMs among Contracting Parties can create the confidence needed to successfully identify and recognise OECMs. In turn, this will strengthen the contributions of area-based measures to in situ biodiversity conservation in the north-east Atlantic and contribute to the ecosystem-based approach to managing human activities in the marine environment.

Contracting Parties are encouraged to use this Guidance to help scope out potential OECMs in their national waters. The Guidance is also available for reference by other competent authorities and stakeholders, including in the high seas, to support their evaluation of their area-based conservation measures as potential OECMs.

For more information,
please visit ospar.org