

Overview of OSPAR's activities on Oceans and sustainable development: integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The OSPAR Convention is the cu

The above activities support the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environmental Strategy, which promotes the ecosystem-based approach to managing human activities using Marine Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management. OSPAR has also established a working group on Marine Spatial Planning to exchange best practice.

One of the strengths of an intergovernmental organisation like OSPAR is that policy decisions made by the Contracting Parties will naturally take in social and economic considerations through internal national coordination processes. This is a strength that means that regulation of pollution, such as from offshore industry, radioactivity or land-based sources, already has social and economic practicability (such as best available techniques and best environmental practices) built into the solutions. OSPAR 2014 agreed a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, which has further extended OSPAR's activity to this important marine pollutant. OSPAR is also exploring how to better monitor and assess the impacts of ambient and impulsive noise in the marine environment.

In terms of practical application of activities to manage the risks from human activities, informed by the sensitivity of the ecosystem, OSPAR and the Helsinki Commission have developed guidelines for granting of exemptions to the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention. This work, which has developed an online tool for shipping operators, will ensure a consistent approach to ballast water management across two regional convention areas to enhance the protection of the marine environment.

Again, under practical implementation of integrated approaches, OSPAR has now agreed with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission a "collective arrangement". This sets out how the two organisations can cooperate and coordinate with respect to their activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction; in the case of NEAFC its designated no-fishing areas, and in the case of OSPAR, its Marine Protected Areas.

OSPAR's sister organisation, the BONN Agreement is also working on an integrated approach to managing the impact of accidental spills of oil and other hazardous substances in the marine environment. Under the Be Aware project (part-funded by the European Union), the risks and magnitude of spills from shipping and offshore industry have been modelled. These models are now being applied to an environmental and socio-economic sensitivity analysis of coastal areas to determine the likely impacts of such spills and the mitigating measures that the BONN Agreement parties can put in place. This approach, as well as OSPAR's approach to regulation of offshore industry, is of keen interest to be shared with the Convention for the Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region (the Abidjan Convention).