



Summary Status of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas 2016



OSPAR Thematic Assessment

Key Message Since the 2010 Quality Status Report, OSPAR countries have nominated a further 289 marine protected areas to the Network, now comprising 448 protected areas, representing 5.9% of the OSPAR Maritime Area. Considerable progress has been made towards an ecologically coherent and well-managed network, particularly within the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas. Nevertheless, further work is required

Background

In 2003, OSPAR set the goal to establish a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) across the North-East Atlantic and to ensure that it is ecologically coherent and well-managed. It is intended that the MPA network makes a significant contribution to the sustainable use, protection and conservation of marine biodiversity across the North-East Atlantic, including in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ).

The assessment of ecological coherence was based on OSPAR's principles for an ecologically coherent network of MPAs. The following criteria were used:

- The geographic distribution of MPAs across the OSPAR Maritime Area to assess connectivity;
- The proportion of biogeographic provinces within MPAs to assess representativity; and
- The extent to which OSPAR listed habitat and species are protected within MPAs, to assess sufficiency of protecting features and their resilience.

The following questions were used to explore how well-managed the OSPAR MPA network is. These are based on the key stages in the implementation cycle of an MPA:

- Is MPA management documented?
- Are measures implemented?
- Is monitoring in place?
- Movement towards or achievement of conservation objectives?

With a better understanding of ecological coherence and management within the MPA network, OSPAR will be better able to identify gaps in the network and whether management measures need adjustment. Further details of both assessments are provided in the 2016 Status Report of the OSPAR MPA Network.

Results

Overall Status of the OSPAR MPA Network

On 1 October 2016, the OSPAR Network comprised 448 MPAs (**Figure 1**), including seven MPAs situated in ABNJ. The OSPAR MPA network covers 5.9% of the OSPAR Maritime Area and there is good coverage of coastal waters (16.7%). In the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of OSPAR countries, 2.3% of waters are covered and 8.9% are covered in areas beyond national EEZs.

The coverage of MPAs in the OSPAR Regions is shown in **Table 1**. In the Greater North Sea, the Convention on Biological Diversity target of 10% coverage by area-based measures has been exceeded.

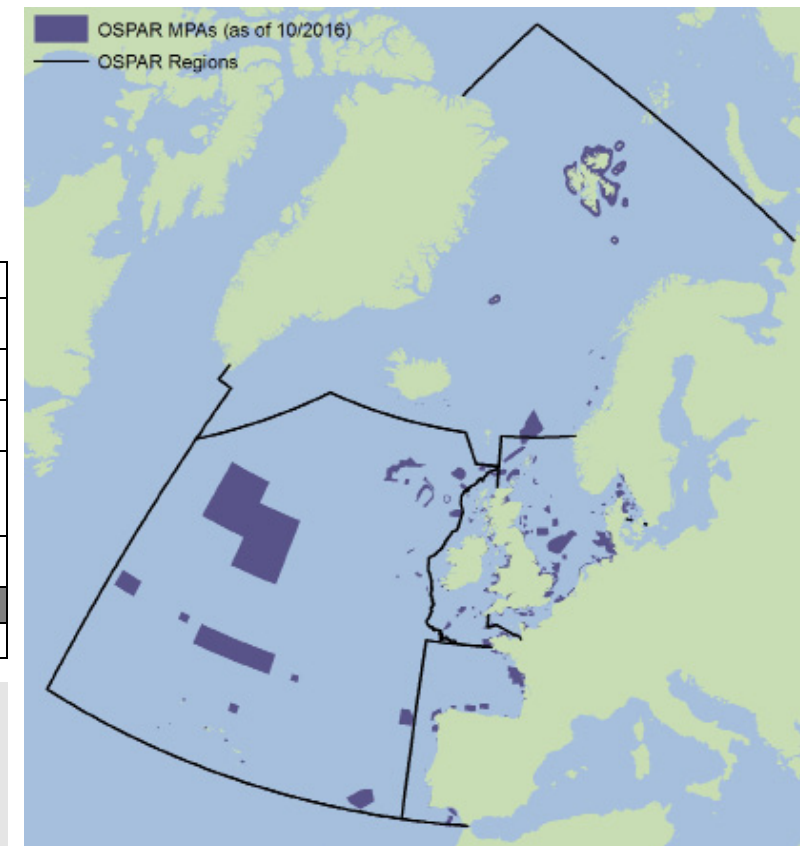
Ecological Coherence of The OSPAR MPA Network

Despite good progress since 2010, the OSPAR MPA network cannot yet be considered ecologically coherent. Although the OSPAR MPA network is well distributed in the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas, substantial gaps remain in Arctic Waters and the Wider Atlantic.

OSPAR Region	% coverage with MPA
Arctic Waters	1.9
Greater North Sea	14.7
Celtic Seas	7.6
Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast	5.9
Wider Atlantic	8.3
OSPAR Maritime Area	5.9

Table 1: Percentage (%) coverage of the five OSPAR Regions by OSPAR MPAs as of October 2016

Figure 1: OSPAR MPAs across OSPAR Regions (as of October 2016)



Results cont...

Nineteen of the 54 OSPAR listed features (i.e. species or habitats) are protected by more than one MPA in those parts of the North-East Atlantic where they are considered to be at risk. This includes all five listed invertebrates, three of the seven bird species, one of the two reptile species, one of the three marine mammal species, five of the 22 fish species and four of the 15 types of habitat.

Management of the OSPAR MPA network

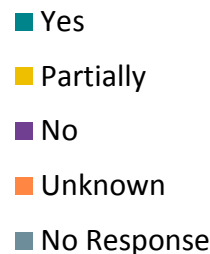
MPA management information is publicly documented for 61% of OSPAR MPAs, with a further 16% partially documented (**Figure 2**). The latter is largely due to Contracting Parties updating conservation objectives or because work to identify potential management actions is ongoing.

Management measures have been implemented for 12% of OSPAR MPAs, with partial action for a further 54% (**Figure 2**). The situation is similar for site condition monitoring, where data have not yet been collected for all MPAs. As a result, only 11% of OSPAR MPAs are known to be moving towards or have achieved their conservation objectives.

Countries have started to implement management actions for OSPAR MPAs in ABNJ. Successful management, however, requires cooperation with international organisations with competence for the management of human activities, such as fishing, shipping and deep sea mining. A mechanism to help cooperation and communication between such organisations has been initiated in the North East Atlantic, referred to as 'the collective arrangement'.

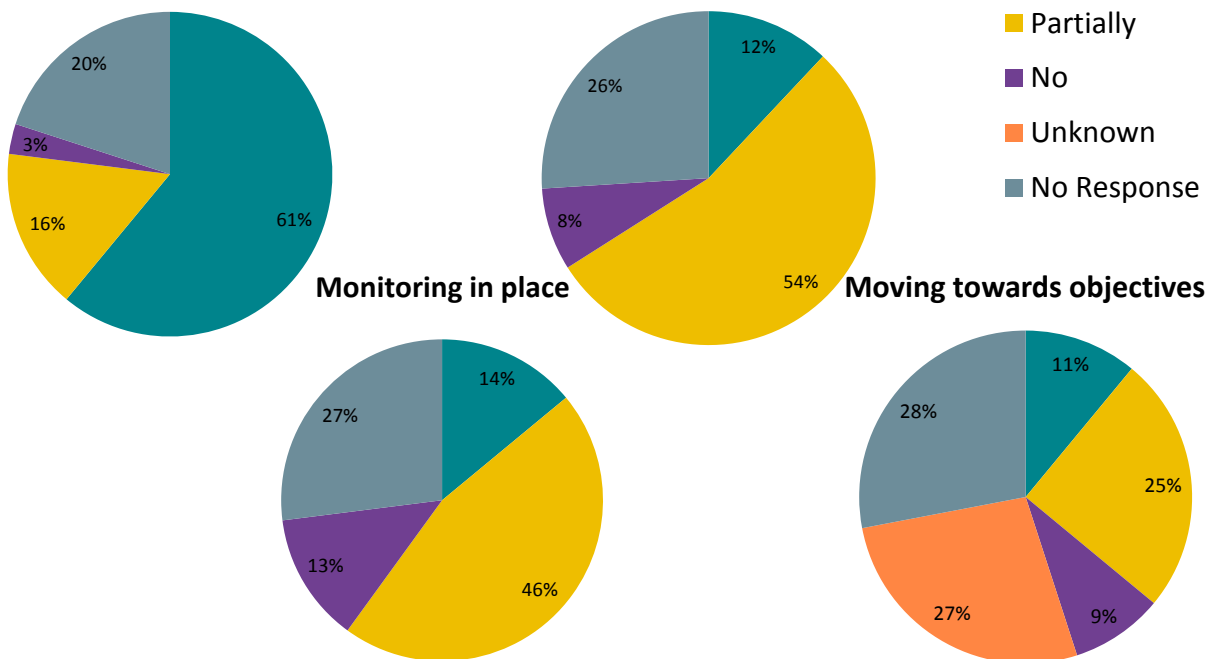
Management documented

Measures implemented



Monitoring in place

Moving towards objectives



Conclusion

Considerable progress has been made towards an ecologically-coherent and well-managed MPA network within the OSPAR Maritime Area, particularly within the Greater North Sea and Celtic Seas.

In the context of ecological coherence, efforts are needed to fill the perceived gaps in the MPA network. The Arctic Waters, Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast and the Wider Atlantic could benefit from further MPA nominations. Further work is also required to ensure that habitats and species considered by OSPAR to be at risk, are adequately protected by MPAs where appropriate.

In the context of MPA management, additional efforts to implement management measures necessary to achieve the conservation objectives of the protected features of OSPAR MPAs should be considered. In parallel, long-term monitoring programmes could be broadened to evaluate with greater confidence whether the conservation objectives of OSPAR MPAs are being achieved.

For OSPAR MPAs in ABNJ, cooperation through dialogue and information sharing with relevant competent international organisations should be continued, in order to help the implementation of effective management measures for these MPAs.

Knowledge Gaps

The assessment methodologies for establishing ecological coherence and management effectiveness within Marine Protected Areas require development before the next OSPAR assessment, to ensure the results are robust.

To further develop these assessments the following information is required: Data and information to help support evaluation of the OSPAR conservation objectives, distribution, protection, and status of OSPAR listed features and habitats; knowledge of critical areas for wide-ranging species; and, improved information on the management status of all OSPAR MPAs.

Figure 2: OSPAR MPA Management. The pie charts represent each of the four questions used to assess MPA management as of October 2016

This document was published as part of OSPAR's Intermediate Assessment 2017.

The full assessment can be found at www.ospar.org/assessments