



Strategy of the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic 2030

Implementation plan

(OSPAR Agreement 2021-02)¹

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¹ English only

Introduction

1. The Strategy of the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic 2030 (NEAES 2030, OSPAR Agreement 2021-01) was adopted on 1 October 2021 by OSPAR Ministers and the Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries of the European Union. The Strategy steers the implementation of the OSPAR Convention in the period up to 2030. It contains a vision, strategic objectives and operational objectives covering the wide span of OSPAR's responsibilities. Contracting Parties have agreed to develop an implementation plan to support work to put the Strategy into effect. The plan is a living document, setting out specific actions and tasks to achieve the NEAES objectives and will be used by OSPAR to record and assess progress with implementation of the Strategy.

2. This Agreement outlines the purpose and, in Appendix 1, the structure of the implementation plan. It describes the process through which the OSPAR Committees and other subsidiary bodies will develop and report on content for the plan and how the Coordination Group (CoG), OSPAR Heads of Delegation (HOD) and the OSPAR Commission itself will use the plan to assess progress and help ensure the effective delivery of OSPAR's work.

Purpose of the NEAES implementation plan

3. The purpose of the implementation plan is to support the delivery of the NEAES 2030 through establishing a clear line of sight between the strategic and operational objectives of the NEAES 2030 and the regular work of the OSPAR Committees and other subsidiary bodies. The plan specifies tasks to be delivered collectively by Contracting Parties in support of the operational and strategic objectives and then provides a means of reporting on their delivery. By integrating all such tasks within a single programme, CoG, HOD and the OSPAR Commission can maintain a regular overview of progress and initiate actions as and when necessary to keep the Strategy on track.

4. The implementation plan:

- Is a living document, allowing for the addition, amendment or removal of tasks as well as regular reporting;
- Provides key information on tasks, for example showing links to NEAES 2030 objectives, responsible Committees and Contracting Parties, and milestones for delivery;
- Is interlinked with the OSPAR MAP tool;
- Reports on progress with implementation of the Strategy and thereby regularly informs the Commission and – via the website – other interested parties;
- Highlights any risks to delivery of individual tasks or to the programme overall;
- Replaces the Committees' work programmes;
- Provides a focus for improved dialogue between Committees and CoG/HOD/OSPAR Commission over priorities and resourcing;
- Supports evaluation by specifying "evaluation criteria" in the task templates; and
- Strengthens accountability and transparency to external stakeholders.

Structure and content

5. Appendix 1 to this Agreement presents in table form the outline structure and content of the implementation plan. The table displays key information on each task, extracted from a supporting task template (see section 4) i.e. task name, anticipated output, responsible Committee, task manager, task start date and delivery milestones. The entry indicates the principal relevant strategic and operational objectives as well as any other operational objectives to which the task contributes. A field is provided for progress reporting (maximum two sentences). Three other columns are provided for “RAG” (Red/Amber/Green) ratings.

6. The RAG ratings can be used to summarise results and give CoG/HOD/OSPAR Commission a high-level overview of the state of play across the whole NEAES 2030. Ratings are provided on:

- Progress (this should be used to indicate whether an individual task is on track or whether action is needed to facilitate completion of the task);
- Resources (this should be used to highlight whether the necessary resources for an individual task are in place or not and, if not, whether the issue needs to be addressed at Committee or HoD level);
- Programme risk (this will be derived from the progress and resource RAG ratings combined with an impact rating. It will be used to highlight risks to the delivery of one or more strategic/operational objectives).

7. The ratings broadly follow the RAG traffic light system but with some variations, as shown in figure 1.



Figure 1: Implementation plan RAG ratings

8. Most of the information in the implementation plan should be relatively stable and not require regular updating, once tasks have been entered onto the database. The main fields requiring regular review and updating are the progress reporting (maximum two sentences) field and the RAG ratings on progress to deliver the task and on resources.

9. Where an operational objective refers to an activity that is managed through the OSPAR Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP), it may simply cross-refer to the relevant JAMP product. Otherwise, the implementation plan does not generally deal with monitoring and assessment work, which continues to be managed through the JAMP. As the Quality Status Report 2023 nears completion, CoG will consider whether to integrate monitoring and assessment work more fully within the implementation plan, or whether to continue with the JAMP or some other format.

10. During the initial phase-in period (2021-2022) Committees and other subsidiary bodies should migrate relevant actions from their existing work programmes into the implementation plan. Other kinds of action could be managed as necessary through terms of reference, lists of meeting actions or the JAMP.

11. The implementation plan as set out in Appendix 1 is not populated with any content on the tasks. The “live” version of the plan will be managed via a dedicated OSPAR NEAES 2030 Sharepoint site. Task leads will enter updated information via Sharepoint, and OSPAR delegates will be able to view the latest version of the implementation plan at any moment.

Implementation Plan tasks

12. OSPAR Committees (and the ICGs reporting to CoG) are responsible for identifying and specifying tasks to be recommended to CoG/HoD for inclusion into the implementation plan. A template and supporting guidance are provided (Annex A) to assist with drafting tasks and to facilitate a consistent approach across OSPAR subsidiary bodies. In addition to the information included in the implementation plan table, the task templates capture supporting information on the description and rationale for the task, resources, risks, evaluation criteria and references. This information will help Committees decide on whether to include a task in their work. It will also help future assessors to understand the original purpose of a task and evaluate whether it has achieved its original objectives. Task leads and Committees should make use of the implementation plan in combination with the OSPAR Measures and Actions Programme (MAP) matrix in order to help identify where there may be implementation gaps and where therefore additional activities need to be developed. The implementation plan should not duplicate the content of the MAP, which remains the tool for recording agreed OSPAR measures and coordination and overview reporting on assessments of their implementation and effectiveness.

13. All completed and agreed task templates will be uploaded onto the OSPAR NEAES 2030 Sharepoint site. It is not generally envisaged that the templates will be revised unless there are substantive changes in scope. Once a task has been completed it should be reported as such during that year’s meeting cycle to the responsible OSPAR Committee and OSPAR Commission. Completed tasks will thereafter be archived on the Sharepoint site.

14. Tasks with no identified task manager (named individual(s) not just ICG or Committee) should be placed in a “holding pen” on Sharepoint until a task manager has been identified.

Reporting and review

Roles of task managers and Committees

15. Task managers are responsible for providing updates at least annually (but preferably as and when there are developments) on progress reporting (maximum two sentences) and the progress and resourcing RAG ratings for their tasks. This should be done directly onto OSPAR NEAES 2030 Sharepoint and at least

three weeks in advance of the spring meetings, in discussion with the Secretariat. The “red” RAG rating should be used to indicate an issue requiring the attention of CoG/HOD. This should be the exception, not the norm. An “amber” rating would mean that the issue should be dealt with by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. See Figure 1. The RAG rating on programme risk will be calculated by the Secretariat by combining the progress and resource scores with the impact rating from the task template.

16. Meetings of Committee or subsidiary bodies should conduct their own progress check and identify any issues that should be brought to the attention of CoG/HOD as appropriate. If a task is given a ‘red’ rating, the task lead and Committee/subsidiary body should prepare advice on the issue and possible solutions. They should furthermore consider any guidance from CoG, HOD or OSPAR on the implementation of specific tasks.

Roles of Coordination Group (CoG)

17. The Secretariat is responsible for preparing an annual management report for CoG, following on from the spring Committee/subsidiary body meetings. The report should include the full updated implementation plan, but in addition should present a high-level overview of progress, completed tasks, risks and issues requiring attention of CoG as appropriate. This will include advice on any issues preventing agreed tasks being held in the holding pen from being promoted to the implementation plan, or where tasks have been removed. The report should cross-refer to any more detailed papers provided by the Committees/subsidiary bodies.

18. CoG is responsible for reviewing the implementation plan overall but focusing on the highlighted issues from the Secretariat’s report. It should report its conclusions to HOD and identify issues which require HOD attention, [i] [with the focus being on] issues with possible financial implications.

19. CoG should also consider any proposals from its own subsidiary bodies for additional tasks to be included, updated or archived upon completion.

20. The Secretariat may provide an update report to the autumn CoG meeting, focussing mainly on any actions taken to address previously highlighted issues.

Roles of HOD

21. HOD is responsible for approving the implementation plan for submission to the annual OSPAR Commission meeting. While most substantive discussion of the plan and management report would be taken at CoG, HOD will need to address issues involving financing or any other unresolved matters referred to it by CoG. Based on the advice from CoG and Committees, HOD may also decide to adjust certain RAG ratings, for example where it considers that an issue has been resolved or where it should be taken at Committee level. New tasks will be highlighted – with hyperlinks to the templates.

Roles of the OSPAR Commission

22. The OSPAR Commission is responsible for approving the implementation plan every year. It will consider any outstanding issues submitted to it by HOD.

Publication

23. The implementation plan as approved by the OSPAR Commission will be publicly available as an annex to the OSPAR Commission Summary Record. It will also be placed on a more publicly accessible part of the

OSPAR website, interlinked with the OSPAR MAP tool, in order to strengthen accessibility and transparency. A summary of progress will be included in the OSPAR Commission's Annual Report.

Evaluation

24. The NEAES 2030 states that delivery of the Strategy, including through the adoption of OSPAR programmes and measures (Decisions, Recommendations and Agreements), will be reviewed by the OSPAR Commission. Furthermore, by 2025 and in light of the findings of the QSR 2023 and other emerging issues and/or evidence, it will be decided whether the Strategy needs any adjustments. This will include consideration of whether the design and operation of the implementation plan should be revised.

25. The implementation and effectiveness of all OSPAR programmes and measures, once adopted, will be assessed under the OSPAR measures and actions programme (MAP), not the implementation plan. The OSPAR Commission will develop a structured and systematic approach to this review that takes into account measures taken in other relevant fora, such as the UN and EU.

Annex A: Task template and guidance

Task template for tasks proposed for inclusion in the implementation plan

	Field	Guidance
1*	Task name	<i>Short title</i>
2	Task description	<i>Paragraph to describe the activity</i>
3*	Strategic objectives to which the task contributes	<i>All tasks must link to a SO</i>
4*	Operational Objectives to which the task contributes	<i>In some cases, tasks will link directly to a SO</i>
5*	Responsible Committee	
6*	Task manager	
7	Task support	
8	Rationale for the task	<i>Include how OSPAR action adds value to existing national and international work</i>
9*	Task start date and milestones	
10	Resources to implement the task	
11	Risks	
12*	Anticipated outputs	
13	Evaluation criteria	<i>What will success look like? Identify relevant OSPAR indicators</i>
14	References	<i>e.g., Committee SR §§xx; OSPAR Decisions, Recommendations & Agreement</i>
15	Impact rating	<i>Select one of the following:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Task will support the delivery of one or more strategic objectives and/or operational objectives</i> 2. <i>Task will have a significant impact on one or more operational objectives</i> 3. <i>Task will have a significant impact on one or more strategic objectives and/or fully implement one or more operational objectives</i> 4. <i>Task will have a critical impact on one or more strategic objectives and fully implement one or more operational objectives</i>

* Information to be included in implementation plan; template will be stored on Sharepoint

Guidance on developing content for the NEAES 2030 implementation plan

1. The NEAES 2030 implementation plan is a living document that is continuously updated. It aims to rationalise the current set of steering documents of OSPAR to ensure no extra burden is placed on Committees.

Aim

2. The aim of the implementation plan is to clearly communicate at any point in time, how the work of OSPAR and its Committees contributes to delivery of OSPAR policy priorities as expressed through the strategic objectives in Part I and operational objectives of Part II of the NEAES 2030.

3. Existing Committee work programme products that directly contribute to the delivery of strategic objectives and operational objectives should be considered for inclusion in the implementation plan. “One-off” actions to be delivered in the coming meeting cycle, should be captured as “Actions from the Meeting”. Responsibilities of WG/ICG leads to deliver progress reports, and similar standing items of the current work programmes, should be captured in the Terms of Reference of work for the groups and in the meeting Agendas as relevant.

Evaluation criteria

4. The work to complete a progress review of NEAES 2010-2020 found that it was difficult to conclude on whether the objectives had been achieved in some cases. Ultimately, the achievement of OSPAR’s vision and strategic objectives will be demonstrated through status assessment reports. However, the implementation plan can help ensure that the tasks identified as being necessary to achieve those objectives are put in place and successfully implemented. To support this, the implementation plan requires that relevant “evaluation” criteria are specified when a task is drafted. These can be a mix of output (what is actually being produced), impact (what measurable effect it might have, e.g., people use the guidance) and outcome indicators (e.g. changes in the environment). These evaluation criteria are not the same as criteria for assessing the effectiveness of measures, which remains under the remit of TG-MAP.

Link to JAMP

5. Monitoring and assessment are a large component of Committees’ work. The JAMP has been agreed until 2023 and the delivery of the QSR 2023. Up until that time, the JAMP products are still maintained and updated. After the completion of the current JAMP products in 2023, it will be possible to review whether to move tasks on monitoring and assessment into the implementation plan. Committee meetings should not work to link JAMP products to the implementation plan nor to write tasks related to monitoring and assessment for the implementation plan.