

Progress towards an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs for the North-East Atlantic

Background

Following up on the commitments given at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (WSSD 2002), the Environment Ministers of OSPAR and HELCOM Contracting Parties agreed at their Meetings in Bremen, June 2003 to have an ecologically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction, established in both maritime areas by 2010. The OSPAR Commission also adopted OSPAR Recommendation 2003/3 and guidelines for selecting and managing an OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). OSPAR and HELCOM adopted a joint work programme to ensure timely implementation of their respective instruments on MPAs.

The initial MPA nomination phase, including Natura 2000 sites, shall be completed in December 2005 and sites adopted by OSPAR 2006. By 2010, the individual sites proposed shall be supplemented to form an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs (OSPAR Biodiversity Strategy, § 4.4) which will:

- a. protect, conserve and restore species, habitat and ecological processes which have been adversely affected by human activities;
- b. prevent degradation of, and damage to, species, habitats and ecological processes, following the precautionary principle; and
- c. protect and conserve areas that best represent the range of species, habitats and ecological processes in the maritime area.

Poor progress towards an OSPAR MPA network

WWF's analysis reveals that most Contracting Parties to OSPAR will fall short of their commitments to nominate a first set of marine protected areas by December 2005. The two-step process envisaged in the OSPAR Recommendation 2003/3 builds on national nominations of areas according to the OSPAR guidelines for selection of MPAs until December 2005, and adoption by the OSPAR Commission in June 2006. A first „review of the ecological coherence and management of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas“ is scheduled for 2005/6, a second for 2009/10. However, one year prior to adoption of the national nominations, only Sweden has nominated a suite of areas covering inshore and offshore waters. Ireland and the UK have announced substantial tranches of sites in 2005. Processes for selection and designation in all other Contracting Parties' waters are severely delayed compared to the timeframe adopted by the North Sea Conference in 2002 and/or the OSPAR Ministerial Conference in 2003 (Fig. 1).

While the practical reasons for the delay of action are manifold, the root cause of the problem seems to be the very limited acceptance of governmental commitments adopted under regional seas conventions by other policy sectors and stakeholders involved in the process. The development and implementation of national and regional marine strategies will be crucial to prevent marine conservation from being seen as a cost factor rather than being recognised as an approach creating benefits for societies and economies.

**Meeting of the
OSPAR Commission
Malahide
Ireland
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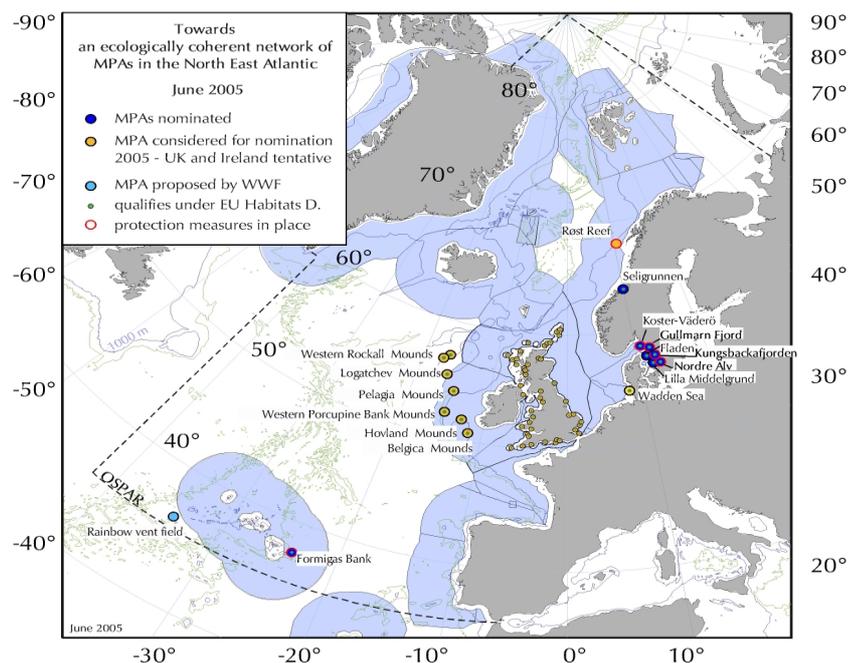


Fig. 1: Status of expected national nominations for the OSPAR network of marine protected areas: June 2005

**Progress evaluation with respect to national contributions to OSPAR network of MPAs:
June 2005**

Contracting party	Status of OSPAR MPA nominations (for adoption by OSPAR 2006)	Policy	Coastal nominations	Offshore nominations
Belgium	No nominations expected	- Management measures and full stakeholders consultation prior to nomination - One SCI nominated to EU, research on potential SPAs ongoing		
Denmark Faroes Greenland	No nominations expected	- Only Natura 2000 sites to become part of the OSPAR MPA network		
France	No nominations expected			
Germany	One nomination (Wadden Sea SH) considered	- No legal provisions to implement OSPAR MPAs. - No nomination of offshore SCIs prior to acceptance by the European Commission - Nomination of Wadden Sea Schleswig Holstein pending		
Iceland	No nominations expected	- Ongoing consideration of MPA nomination of nationally closed areas and cold water coral reef sites		
Ireland	Publication and nomination of 4 cold water coral reefs inside, and 3 outside the Irish EEZ expected in 2005	- Resolution of management issues, stakeholder consultations and boundary delimitations before publication of the sites selected		
The Netherlands	No nominations expected	- Ongoing consultations on a national system of protected areas – earliest nominations 2006		
Norway	One coral reef nominated, (Seligrunden, 0.7 km ²), second reef (Røst, 280 km ²) considered	- Further sites for nomination when the first phase of Norway's national plan for MPAs have been fulfilled in 2007.		
Portugal Azores	No nominations One site (Formigas) nominated	- Only sites protected as marine protected areas by national or regional law are eligible. - Nominate of SACs for OSPAR network of MPAs only if additional conservation value. National policy prevents further nominations.	 	 
Spain	No nominations in 2005 expected	First nominations expected for end 2006, first offshore nominations (Galicia Bank) intended before 2008		
Sweden	Nomination of 6 sites inshore and offshore	- Nomination of nationally protected sites or accepted SCIs. Management is in regional responsibility. Further site in Skagerrak considered.		
UK	74 nominations of SCIs in territorial waters before end 2005	- No legal provisions to implement offshore OSPAR MPAs. - First set of offshore SCIs (incl. Darwin Mounds) close to publication. - More complex Natura 2000 sites and non-Natura 2000 MPAs will be considered and submitted to OSPAR in the period 2005-2010.		



No progress visible



Progress expected, but not within 2-step timeframe adopted by Ministerial Meeting 2003



Good progress visible with respect to adoption of a first set of MPAs by OSPAR