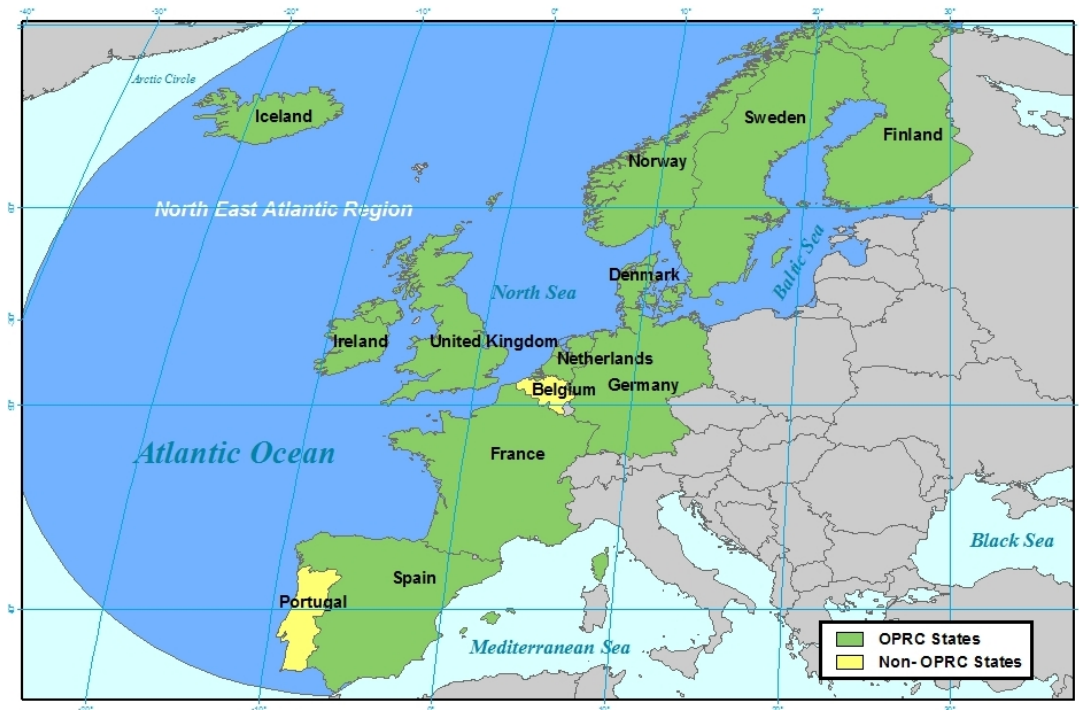


# NORTH EAST ATLANTIC



The North East Atlantic region comprises countries party to the OSPAR Convention (the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic), namely Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The Baltic Sea area is covered in a separate Regional Profile.

## THE RISK OF OIL SPILLS

The OSPAR Convention signatory countries are major consumers of oil and consequently large volumes of both crude oil and refined products are transported within this region. A major proportion of crude oil is imported via the Mediterranean and Africa past the coasts of Portugal, Spain and France. Whilst a proportion of this traffic supplies the domestic refineries of these three countries, notably Sines, Vizcaya, Lorient and Le Havre, laden tankers pass through the English Channel bound for the major oil refineries and terminals of Rotterdam, Northern Germany and the Baltic countries. The tankers pass well off the French and Iberian coasts but do come close to land at Cape Finisterre, North West Spain and Ushant, France. Indeed, there have been a number of major oil spills in these areas, mainly due to groundings. In December 2003 the International Maritime Organization definitively approved the world's first four-lane traffic separation scheme off Finisterre which will come into force in June 2004 with the objective of pushing vessels carrying potentially dangerous bulk cargoes away from the treacherous coastline of Galicia. This was one of the first initiatives tabled by the Spanish government to improve maritime safety in the wake of the Prestige disaster. A strictly policed vessel traffic separation scheme is already in operation in the English Channel, a particularly busy shipping zone, and has contributed to reducing the number of collisions and serious spills here.

Access to many of the oil terminals along the coasts of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany requires navigation of narrow rivers and channels eg River Schelde to Antwerp, North Sea Canal to Amsterdam, Caland Canal to the petroleum port of Rotterdam, and the River Elbe to Hamburg. A large number of tankers transit these routes, creating a high risk of collision or grounding.

The North Sea is a major oil production area. While much of the output is carried in pipelines for domestic consumption, a high proportion is transported by shuttle tankers to terminals such as Mongstad (Norway) and Sullom Voe (UK). A significant portion is also exported to destinations in North America. This tanker traffic creates a risk of oil spills, notably in the shipping channels off northern Scotland.

Elsewhere in the UK, the Solent is an area of high risk with high volumes of shipping and a major refinery and terminal. Milford Haven with two refineries is also a high risk area and has been the site of several major spills. A small refinery at Cork in southern Ireland generates some crude traffic to that country. This is supported by imports of refined products from the UK. Traffic traversing the Irish Sea generates a small risk of spills.

Traffic levels in the northern areas of the OSPAR region are relatively low in comparison with the rest of the region. Iceland having no established refinery and with minor quantities of fuel oil imported constitutes a low risk area for spills of persistent oil. The carriage of non-persistent products is also comparatively modest. Traffic across the Denmark Strait to Greenland is similarly limited to fuel supplies. Until recently, the northern Norwegian Sea and Barents Sea also had limited tanker traffic, with supplies of fuel to northern Norwegian and Finnish settlements presenting a low risk of incidents occurring, even in winter weather conditions with long periods of ice cover. This is changing, however, with the increasing flow of oil from Murmansk in Russia down the Norwegian coast to the markets of Western Europe and the USA. Tanker traffic has already risen sharply, with about 200 tankers passing Norway every year (2003 data). Norway is applying to the IMO to have the Barents Sea declared a "particularly sensitive sea area" PSSA, which would allow Oslo to ban ships from coming within 50 nautical miles of its coast and set demands for tanker quality.

### Major tanker spills of over 5,000 tonnes in the North East Atlantic Seas Region since 1974

Vessel Name	Quantity spilled		Country	Year	Cause
	(tonnes)	(Type)			
AMOCO CADIZ	223,000	CRUDE	FRANCE	1978	GROUNDING
URQUIOLA	100,000	CRUDE	SPAIN	1976	GROUNDING
JAKOB MAERSK	88,000	CRUDE	PORTUGAL	1975	GROUNDING
BRAER	84,000	CRUDE	UNITED KINGDOM	1993	GROUNDING
PRESTIGE	77,000	FUEL (CARGO)	SPAIN	2002	HULL FAILURE
AEGEAN SEA	73,500	CRUDE	SPAIN	1992	GROUNDING
SEA EMPRESS	72,360	CRUDE	UNITED KINGDOM	1996	GROUNDING
ANDROS PATRIA	50,000	CRUDE	SPAIN	1978	HULL FAILURE
GINO	32,000	CARBON BLACK FEEDSTOCK	FRANCE	1979	COLLISION
BETELGEUSE	30,000	CRUDE	IRELAND	1979	FIRE/EXPLOSION
ARAGON	25,000	CRUDE	PORTUGAL (Madeira)	1989	HULL FAILURE
ERIKA	19,800	FUEL (CARGO)	FRANCE	1999	HULL FAILURE
TANIO	13,500	FUEL (CARGO)	FRANCE	1980	HULL FAILURE
NEW WORLD	11,000	CRUDE	PORTUGAL	1994	COLLISION
BONA FULMAR	7,000	WHITE PRODUCT	FRANCE	1997	COLLISION
SIVAND	6,000	CRUDE	UNITED KINGDOM	1983	COLLISION
BÖHLEN	5,700	CRUDE	FRANCE	1976	GROUNDING
ELENI V	5,000	FUEL (CARGO)	UNITED KINGDOM	1978	COLLISION

## THE STATE OF PREPAREDNESS

The large number of major oil spills in this region has resulted in the majority of countries having well developed contingency plans. National plans for Portugal and Ireland are still in the draft phase. All countries have Tier 1 resources suitably sited for response to spills at terminals and oil handling facilities. Many countries also have developed Tier 2 capabilities in order to respond to larger spills including those from passing tankers.

Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL), an oil industry owned Tier 3 stockpile established in Southampton, UK, is one of the largest oil spill response bases and is capable of responding to two simultaneous major crude oil spills. Much of the equipment is pre-packaged for air transport or on trailers for rapid mobilisation. OSRL has chartered aircraft on standby to transport the equipment anywhere in the world. A number of other private specialist contractors are also located in this region.

All OSPAR signatories, with the exception of Belgium and Portugal, are also signatories to the OPRC Convention. In addition the countries bordering the North Sea and English Channel have ratified the Agreement for Cooperation in dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances (Bonn Agreement, 1969) which promotes co-operation between states both before and during spills. The Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden have ratified the Agreement on Cooperation in Taking Measures against Pollution of the Sea by Oil (Copenhagen Agreement, 1971) which has similar aims to the Bonn Agreement. Countries bordering the North-East Atlantic including France, Spain and Portugal are signatories to the Agreement for Cooperation in Protecting the Shores and Coastal Waters of the North East Atlantic Ocean from Accidental Pollution by Oil and Other Harmful Substances (Lisbon Accord, 1990) although this agreement is not yet in force. A number of bilateral agreements are in place between OSPAR Convention signatories to further promote co-operation in marine pollution control. All OSPAR countries are signatories to the 1992 Civil Liability and Fund Conventions.

## STATUS OF CONTINGENCY PLANS, TIERED RESOURCES AND CONVENTIONS

	Competent National Authority	National Plan	Clean-up Resources		Subregional Agreement	MARPOL	OPRC '90	LLMC '76	CLC '69 CLC '92	FUND '92	Inter-vention '69/'73
			Tier 1	Tier 2							
Belgium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Finland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
France	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Iceland	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		'92	'92	'69
Ireland	Yes	Draft	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Norway	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Portugal	Yes	Draft	Yes		Yes	Yes			'92	'92	'73
Spain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Sweden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73

Date of issue: December 2003



# NORTH EAST ATLANTIC

## REGIONAL PROFILES

*A Summary of the Risk of Oil Spills & State of  
Preparedness in UNEP Regional Seas Regions*

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