



Press release

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Joint OSPAR and HELCOM online ballast water management tool goes live

An online risk assessment tool for alien species transfers via the ballast water of commercial ships has been released jointly by OSPAR and HELCOM.

The tool (http://jointbwmexemptions.org/ballast_water_RA), which goes live today, was adopted by the coastal countries of the North-East Atlantic and Baltic Sea regions as part of the joint harmonised procedure on granting exemptions from ballast water treatment provisions of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention) of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

The tool comprises a database on observations of alien species and physical features in ports, a list of target alien species, a list of all marine and alien species observed in port surveys in the region and an agreed risk assessment model.



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This will allow administrations and ship owners to quickly identify routes that may qualify for exemptions to the application of ballast water management for ships (regulation B-3) and those that are unlikely to.

Not only will the tool help protect the environment by identifying routes that could present a high risk for the transfer of alien species, it will ultimately save both the shipping industry and maritime authorities time and money by supporting the decision making process.

The online tool is jointly administered by the OSPAR and HELCOM Secretariats. It has been developed with funding through the HELCOM Aliens 2, [ALIENS 3](#) and [BALSAM](#) projects by HELCOM Secretariat and Germany (BSH/Brockmann consult). The further development of the tool will be supported by the joint task group of the two commissions on Ballast Water Management, which will follow up the implementation of the "Harmonised Procedure" in general.

ENDS

Note for editors

1. The OSPAR Commission was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and updated the 1972 Oslo and 1974 Paris Conventions. It brings together the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, together with the European Community.
2. More than 30 international non-governmental organisations are involved in OSPAR as official Observers. They represent a broad range of interests and expertise related to the marine environment and the uses of marine resources. Many contribute information, insights and standpoints. This is much appreciated feedback from civil society and the economy. The OSPAR Commission greatly values these partnerships that help inform its decisions and other results. (see list on OSPAR website at <http://www.ospar.org/content/content.asp?menu=0016>)
3. The OSPAR Maritime Areas contain some of the busiest sea lanes in the world and both the number of ships and the quantities of cargo are growing rapidly. Although maritime transportation is considered to be a comparatively environmentally friendly means of transport, shipping also has impacts on the marine environment. Problems include; accidental or illegal pollution with oil or hazardous and noxious substances (HNS), introduction of alien invasive species via ballast water, air pollution emissions, toxic substances from anti-fouling paints and pollution with marine litter.
4. The joint harmonised procedure adopted by OSPAR and HELCOM is supplementary to, and specifies further, the provisions of the IMO G7 guidelines on granting exemptions under the Ballast Water Management Convention, the existing international guidance on such risk assessments.
5. Currently the joint online tool includes port sampling data from the some ports in Baltic Sea but will be updated with data from ongoing port sampling in the North East Atlantic and the Baltic during 2014 and the coming years. Live links are provided to several existing databases in order to provide most recent scientific information on for example the environmental tolerance of species.
6. The Joint Task Group on Ballast Water Exemptions consists of the Contracting Parties of both Conventions and is open to official observer organisation from both the shipping and environmental fields. The task group reports to the OSPAR Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee.
7. The Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee identifies and promotes actions to limit sea-based pollution and ways for safer navigation in the Baltic Sea. It also works to ensure enforcement and harmonized implementation of IMOs international shipping regulations in accordance to the 1992 Helsinki Convention.