

What are the problems?

Dumping in this assessment is defined as: “The deliberate disposal in the maritime area of wastes or other matter from vessels or aircraft, from offshore installations, and any deliberate disposal in the maritime area of vessels or aircraft, offshore installations and offshore pipelines”. The term does not include disposal in accordance with MARPOL 73/78 or other applicable international law of wastes or other matter incidental to, or derived from, the normal operations of vessels or aircraft or offshore installations (other than wastes or other matter transported by or to vessels or offshore installations for the purpose of disposal of such wastes or other matter or derived from the treatment of such wastes or other matter on such vessels or aircraft or offshore installations).

The different categories of wastes or other matter considered in this assessment are:

- a. dredged material;
- b. inert materials of natural origin, that is solid, chemically unprocessed geological material the chemical constituents of which are unlikely to be released into the marine environment;
- c. sewage sludge (phased out 1998);
- d. fish waste from industrial fish processing operations;
- e. vessels or aircrafts (phased out 2004).

Dumping activities may cause physical disturbance and may result in the redistribution, and possibility of changing the form, of contamination. Physical disturbance includes increases in suspended matter, which affects primary production and growth of filter-feeding organisms, burial of benthic organisms and changes in substrate character, which may affect benthic communities. Several effects of the disposal of dredged sediment at sea are distinguished in the literature review (OSPAR 2008a). The main effects are related to:

- chemical disturbances;
- increased nutrient input;
- change in sediment structure;
- enhanced sedimentation (burial and smothering);
- increased turbidity;
- enhanced suspended particulate matter.

Information on the dumping location, type of wastes dumped, and associated compounds in dumped waste in the Convention Area is supplied by Contracting Parties and published on an annual basis by OSPAR in ‘Annual Dumping of Wastes at Sea Reports in the OSPAR Maritime Area’ (according to the Format for Annual Reporting on Dumping Operations at Sea (OSPAR 2004b)).

Dumpsites tend to be in estuarine, coastal or near-shore areas in the vicinity of dredging locations (harbours and shipping channels). Two hundred and thirty seven dumpsites were licensed throughout the Convention Area in the mid 1990s. This increased to 383 in 2005 (see Figure 2.1 and 2.2). This increase is partly an artefact of incomplete reporting in the mid 1990s, but there has also been an increase in capital and maintenance dredging for major port extension projects. In future there might be a further increase in dredging due to increasing ship traffic and the use of bigger ships which require deeper and wider navigation routes, as well as an increased maintenance dredging requirement for enlarged port facilities. However, available data do not show any specific trends in the OSPAR Maritime Area.

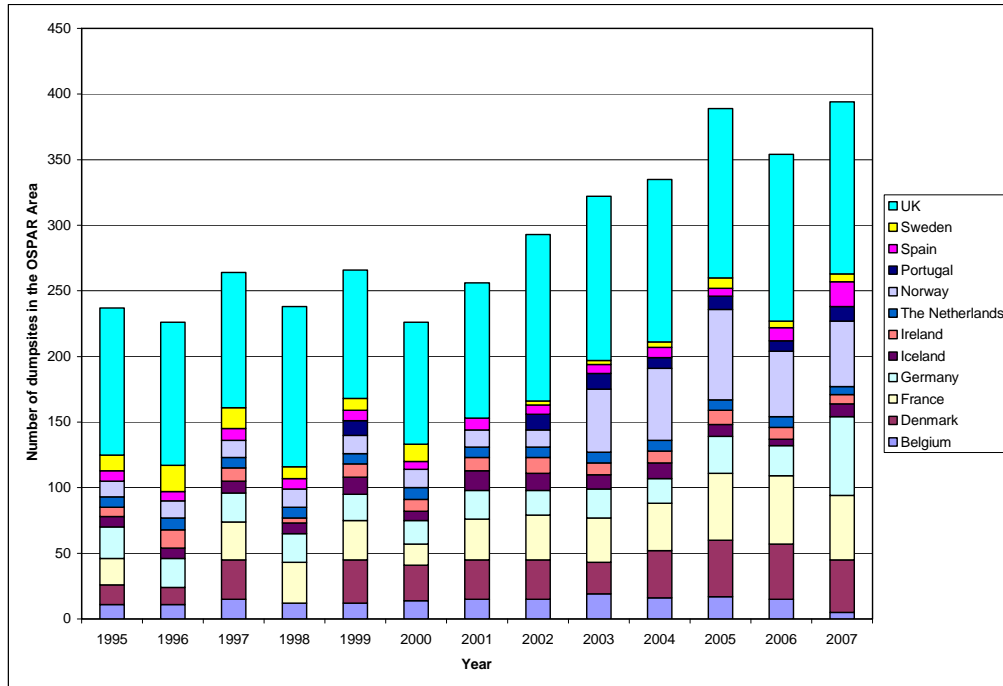


Figure 2.1: Overview of the number and distribution of dumpsites within the OSPAR area
 Source: annual OSPAR Reports on Dumping of Wastes at Sea

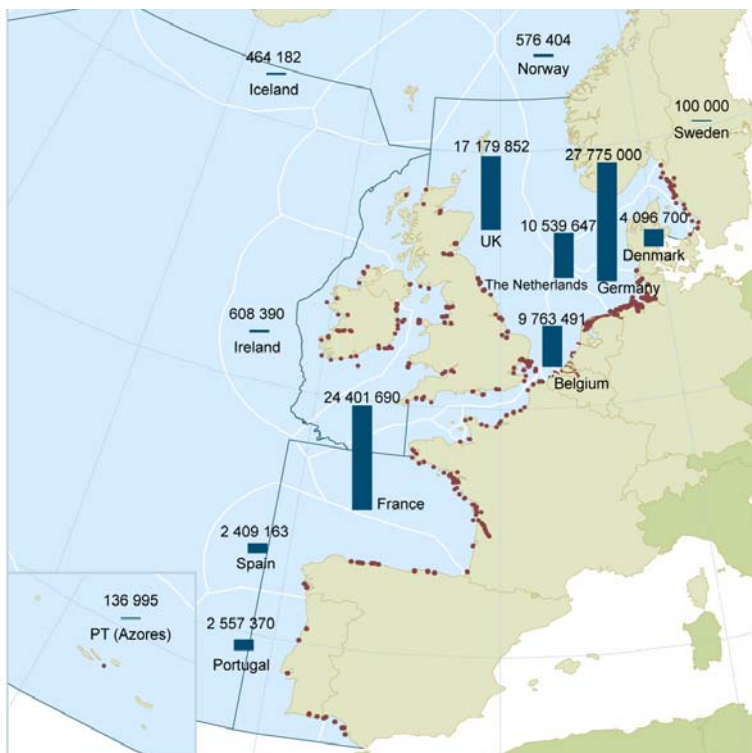


Figure 2.2: Dumpsites and current volumes disposed of in the OSPAR Maritime Area

➔ [Go to full QSR assessment report on the environmental impact of dumping of wastes at sea \(publication number 433/2009\)](#)