Terms of reference for the oil spill identification network of experts within the Bonn Agreement (OSINet)

1. OSINet is the Oil Spill Identification Network of experts established under the Bonn Agreement.
2. OSINet represents an oil forensic community derived from laboratories from the Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties. Additionally, laboratories from the oil industry, R&D institutes, and countries outside the Bonn Agreement framework can participate.

**Background**

1. OSINet was set up by the Bonn Agreement in 2005 after national laboratories had encountered difficulties in identifying oil spill sources from the Tricolor incident in 2002. Since then, the following milestones have been achieved by the group: acceptance of the analytical method as in the CEN[[1]](#footnote-1) Technical Report 15522-2[[2]](#footnote-2); agreement on common methods for sampling as in the Bonn Agreement manuals and the CEN Technical Report 15522-1[[3]](#footnote-3); conduct of annual intercalibration tests and establishment of a database for oil spill identification.

**Aim**

1. OSINet supports its members in using oil forensic analysis to prove the origin of marine pollution by oil and oil products and as evidence for the reimbursement of the cost of response operations, compensation for environmental damage etc. under governmental claims.

**Tasks**

1. To develop and facilitate harmonized sampling and analytical methods.
2. To promote quality assurance in oil spill identification.
3. To provide mutual assistance.
4. To exchange knowledge and share experiences.
5. To conduct annual intercalibration studies (Round Robins) to enhance the knowledge in oil spill forensics. The scope of these studies is described in Annex 1.
6. To organize annual meetings to discuss the results of the Round Robins and facilitate practical knowledge exchange in person at the locations of the hosting member’s laboratories.
7. To review the European Standard CEN1 Technical Report 155222,3,[[4]](#footnote-4) every 5-7 years after its publication. This task might require extra funding through projects.
8. To report its work progress to the Bonn Agreement on an annual basis.

**Participants**

1. OSINet is co-convened by Uta R. Kraus from Germany and Clare Hynes from the United Kingdom.
2. OSINet permanent members include official laboratories nominated by the Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties that are governmentally assigned to carry out oil spill identification. As an exemption and for specific cases, two official laboratories per Contracting Party can be accepted by OSINet.
3. On invitation, further laboratories can join the Network as non-permanent members in order to bring unique experience to the group, e.g. regarding emerging topics or specialized analysis. These non-permanent OSINet members include laboratories from the oil industry, R&D institutes (e.g. universities) and countries outside the Bonn Agreement framework. Non-permanent members are accepted for a two-year period after which their membership will be reviewed.
4. Non-permanent members can be excluded from the group if they do not comply with the obligations set up under ’Tasks’. However, they are exempt from the obligations set out in 9-10.
5. If the overall group size (permanent and non-permanent members) at some point exceeds 25 laboratories, a third convener shall be appointed to keep the workload manageable.
6. OSINET members (both permanent and non-permanent) cannot offer intercalibration tests regarding the proficiency in the method mentioned in 11 to third parties outside the network.

**Working procedure**

1. One of the co-convenors shall give an update of the OSINet activities at the OTSOPA[[5]](#footnote-5) meeting via the annual work progress report.
2. All OSINet members are expected to actively contribute to the group by sharing knowledge and expertise in oil spill forensics.

Annual meetings

1. Each OSINet member shall host the annual meeting in turn at their own cost.
2. The co-convenors shall prepare the agenda of the annual meeting and help with its organisation.
3. All OSINet members are welcome to participate in the annual meeting.
4. All participants of the annual meeting shall support the drafting of the minutes and the work will be assigned to subgroups per meeting by the co-convenors.

Round Robin Test

1. In turn, each OSINet member shall prepare the annual Round Robin exercises and ship the samples at their own cost.
2. OSINet members participating in the Round Robins shall discuss their results in a technical report, which will be shared among the group to provide mutual learning opportunities. The reports shall meet the “Minimum requirements for the acceptance of Round Robins reports for evaluation”. Reports not meeting these requirements shall be excluded from the assessment.
3. The co-convenors shall assess the Round Robin reports from participating OSINet members according to pre-defined assessment schemes and draft a summary report[[6]](#footnote-6) with the main results and findings of the RR test. Complete assessments for a Round Robin shall be done by at least two co-convenors[[7]](#footnote-7).
4. The co-convenors shall establish every year, which non-permanent members will participate in the coming Round Robin tests based on the workload. The participation in the Round Robins is subject to available spots which will be assigned by drawing lots in case there are more non-permanent members than free spots. There will be a limit of 20 assessed reports per year overall.

Working platform

1. OSINet is managed via the dedicated Sharepoint platform managed by the Bonn Agreement Secretariat.
2. Permanent members have access to COSIWeb managed by the BSH[[8]](#footnote-8).

Confidentiality

1. All communication and all documents on the platform, including case discussions and the uploaded documents of the Round Robins (see 26 and 27) are subject to confidentiality. No information from the platform must be shared with third parties although exceptions can be made if all involved OSINET members agree to the sharing.

**Timetable for the work cycle**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1st January | Deadline for submission of Round Robin reports by the member laboratories |
| April | Completion of the assessment of the Round Robin assessment by the convenors |
| April | Annual meeting of OSINet |
| April | Work progress report to OTSOPA |
| May | OTSOPA meeting |
| September | Shipping of the samples for the Round Robin exercise by the facilitating laboratory |

**Review of the ToR**

1. The ToR shall be reviewed as appropriate to reflect any changes in the organizational structure.
2. The list of OSINet member laboratories shall be updated annually.

Annex 1.

**Scope of the annual intercalibration exercises (Round Robins) organised by OSINET**

Fundamental aims of OSINET are mutual assistance and education in oil spill forensics.

The regular participation in the annual intercalibration exercises (“Round Robins”) of the OSINet network is the essential part of the OSINET membership. By these exercises, quality assurance in oil spill identification among the OSINET members is achieved and participating laboratories demonstrate good analytical performance and proficiency in oil spill forensics according to CEN/TR 15522:2012/prEN 15522:2.

Beyond that, it is an essential purpose of OSINET to address a certain analytical issue or a newly emerging topic in each Round Robin. Therefore, the network generates knowledge during the Round Robin exercise which will be shared in the summary report of the Round Robin and discussed at the annual meetings. Thus, by participating in the Round Robin tests, laboratories have the possibility to encounter new or special problems related to environmental oil spill forensics which they might have not yet come across in their day-to-day routine. Each intercalibration test provides the possibility of a practical learning experience, for newly participating laboratories as well as long-standing members. In this, one of OSINet’s most important goals is achieved: A collaborative approach with open transfer of knowledge within the group to improve the standards of all participating laboratories.

However, this also means that the naked figures of an assessment might be misleading. If a laboratory encounters a specific problem it has never dealt with before, it is unlikely that it will end up with the maximum percentage in the assessment. This does not say anything about the proficiency of a laboratory in light of their capability in oil spill forensics. It is more likely to show that the participant embraced the challenge to tackle a new area of expertise.

As a rule of thumb, it can be said that generally, a score of 70-80 % should be reachable if the analytical part of a report shows good quality. However, depending on the topic in a certain Round Robin exercise, these numbers might vary.

1. European Committee for Standardization [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ## Oil spill identification - Waterborne petroleum and petroleum products - Part 2: Analytical methodology and interpretation of results based on GC-FID and GC-MS low resolution analyses

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ## Oil spill identification - Waterborne petroleum and petroleum products - Part 1: Sampling

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Respectively the upcoming EN 15522, which will replace CEN 15522 in 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bonn Agreement Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions Concerning Counter-Pollution Activities (OTSOPA) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The summary report is published on the Bonn Agreement website. The laboratories are renamed in the summary report so that they remain unidentified and other sensitive information is removed (if necessary) before publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The convenors shall work to the best of their ability, however, due to the nature of their employment, casework can compromise set timetables and shift the availability of the convenors. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency [↑](#footnote-ref-8)