

Terms of Reference for Expert Network on Underwater Noise for 2018-2021 (as approved by HOD 55-2018)

Rationale

Progress has been made in the implementation of the Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap 2015-2017, including the establishment of a joint HELCOM/OSPAR registry of licenced impulsive sound events and on-going work for a regional monitoring programme and for monitoring guidelines for continuous noise, as well as new evidence regarding potential impact of underwater noise on species in the Baltic Sea. However, there is still a need to further develop the pre-core indicators and to implement the [2018 Ministerial Declaration](#) commitments on underwater noise (para. 38-40).

Overall aims and tasks

The overall aim of the HELCOM EN-Noise is to contribute to the development of an action plan, preferably by 2021, and regionally coordinated actions on underwater noise, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species identified as sensitive to noise, whilst safeguarding the potential of the Baltic Sea for sustainable human activities. The network shall contribute to the fruitful cooperation between European Regional Seas Conventions, and in particular OSPAR, in order to exchange good practices and to fill knowledge gaps, and to continuing regional work in developing scientifically sound threshold values for underwater noise that are consistent with GES for species identified as sensitive to noise in the Baltic Sea, in close coordination with work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora including EU TG Noise, OSPAR ICG NOISE, UNEP Regional Seas Programme and IMO. Finally, the network is to support to improve our understanding of the adverse impacts of underwater noise on those identified noise sensitive marine species and in particular the cumulative impacts of noise from multiple activities.

The Network will in the period of 2018-2021:

- Support HELCOM work on development of an action plan on underwater noise (decided to be developed preferably by 2021) and of regionally coordinated actions.
- Provide expert input to HELCOM work related to underwater noise, in particular support the Pressure, State & Conservation and Maritime WG, as well as other groups as may be requested.
- Continuing regional work in developing scientifically sound threshold values for underwater noise that are consistent with GES for species and habitats identified as sensitive to noise in the Baltic Sea and (in particular) to further work on the HELCOM input to the process of establishing environmental targets for underwater noise, in close coordination with work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora including EU TG Noise, UNEP Regional Seas Programme and IMO.
- Act as a platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on underwater noise being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts. In particular, support the Lead Countries in the further elaboration of the underwater noise indicators.
- Update the indicator reports at regular intervals as decided in HELCOM.
- Review the state of the art knowledge on impacts of anthropogenic noise on marine species identified as sensitive to noise in the Baltic Sea and in particular the cumulative impacts of noise from multiple activities.
- Update information on available and suitable noise mitigation measures in the Baltic Sea.

Through these actions the Network will also provide expert input to the process of updating the BSAP as needed.

Participants

The expert network will consist of experts nominated by the Contracting Parties and will be open to Observers according to HELCOM procedures. Additional experts and representatives of organizations can be invited to the meetings. The network will cater for cross-sectorial expertise to carry out the tasks as needed.

Working procedures

The expert network works under the mandate of Pressure WG. The expert network will receive guidance from and contribute to State and Conservation WG according to its mandate as well as from Maritime WG (on IMO related issues) and provide support to other groups, in particular HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, as may be requested.

The mode of work for the expert network will be mainly via correspondence and tele-meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed. A Chair for the network has been elected. A detailed work plan for the network might be elaborated. The products will be handled at HELCOM Meeting Portal workspaces dedicated to this use. The HELCOM Secretariat will provide administrative support to the network.