



# Terms of Reference for the HELCOM Expert Group on Underwater Noise (EG Noise) 2022-2024

Adopted by HOD 61-2021

## Rationale

The call for establishing this expert group has been raised through the need to (i) facilitate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise, (ii) develop regional core indicators on underwater noise and (iii) carry out regional assessments on occurrence and impacts of underwater noise in the Baltic Sea.

The duties of the expert group are detailed in the following sections to be fulfilled in the period 2022-2024, in coherence with similar work undertaken by Contracting Parties in other relevant fora. Pressure Working Group will regularly revisit the progress of the work according to these ToR and will consider, together with State and Conservation Working Group arrangements for further work beyond 2024.

## Objectives and tasks

### Facilitate the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise

As part of the work of the Pressure Working Group and in cooperation with Maritime Working Group and other groups as appropriate, the HELCOM EG Noise will:

- Provide expertise to facilitate practical implementation of the HELCOM Recommendation 42-43/1. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Noise will support the Lead Parties for the implementation of individual regional actions and provide expertise to facilitate implementation of actions with no lead.
- Seek synergies with other Regional Seas Conventions, namely OSPAR, the Barcelona Convention and the Bucharest Convention, Northwest Pacific Action Plan, but also other international fora, such as the UN, its specialized agencies and EU. Contracting Parties being also EU member states will regularly coordinate with the MSFD Technical Group on Noise.
- Provide expert input, as may be requested by HELCOM working groups e.g. Maritime WG, on relevant measures to reduce pressures and impacts from underwater noise sources in the HELCOM area 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.
- Provide expert input to relevant actions in the updated BSAP.

## Monitoring and assessment

The HELCOM EG Noise will act as the platform for discussion and review of HELCOM indicators on underwater noise being developed by Lead Countries and appointed experts as part of the work by State and Conservation Working Group. More specifically, the HELCOM EG Noise will support Lead Countries in the further development of HELCOM indicators on underwater noise, taking account, as appropriate, of developments on these topics under the EU MSFD for the EU member states namely:

- Develop and operationalize common indicators and associated definition of Good Environmental Status (GES) related to underwater noise for application in the assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea marine environment.
- 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.
- Assist countries in the reporting of national monitoring data on continuous noise and impulsive noise events to the already established regional databases, to ensure availability of high-quality data for regular assessment of the state of underwater noise in the Baltic Sea area.
- Continue working on the analysis of sensors, devices and methods used to measure underwater noise to ensure the reliability and repeatability of the collected data.

### Participants

The expert group 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 group works under the mandate of Pressure WG. The expert group 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 and EG MAMA, as may be requested.

The mode of work for the expert group will be mainly via correspondence and tele-meetings, with physical meetings being organized as needed. A Chair for the expert group has been elected. A detailed work plan for the expert group 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 expert group.