

Agenda Item 2.1

Review on New Information on Threats and Other  
Issues Relevant to Small Cetaceans

Noise

**Information Document 2.1d**

**Outcome of the Second Joint Session of  
OSPAR ICG-Noise and HELCOM EN-Noise**

**Action Requested**

Take note

Submitted by

OSPAR



## Outcome of the Second Joint Session of OSPAR ICG-Noise and HELCOM EN-Noise, online, 3 June 2020

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## Outcome of the Second Joint Session of OSPAR ICG-Noise and HELCOM EN-Noise, online, 3 June 2020

### Introduction

0.1 A Joint Session of OSPAR ICG-Noise and HELCOM EN-Noise was held online on 3 June 2020.

0.2 The Second Joint Session of OSPAR ICG-Noise and HELCOM EN-Noise was attended by delegations from Denmark, Estonia, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom as well as Observers from CCB, EDA, ICES, IOGP and SAR. The List of participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Second Joint Session of OSPAR ICG-Noise and HELCOM EN-Noise was co-chaired by Mr. Jakob Tougaard, Denmark, Chair of the HELCOM EN-Noise and Mr. Nathan Merchant, United Kingdom, Co-Convener of the OSPAR ICG-Noise. Ms. Lucy Ritchie, OSPAR Communications Lead and Ms. Marta Ruiz, HELCOM Associate Professional Secretary acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

### Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda of the Meeting as contained in document 1-1.

### Agenda Item 2 Continuous noise

2.1 The Meeting took note of the description of the current thinking of HELCOM EN-Noise on how to approach the definition of GES and the setting of threshold values for continuous noise as contained in document 2-1 and **Presentation 1**.

2.2 The Meeting took note of the OSPAR approach in relation to the continuous noise indicators and assessment as contained in the figure below (Figure 1).

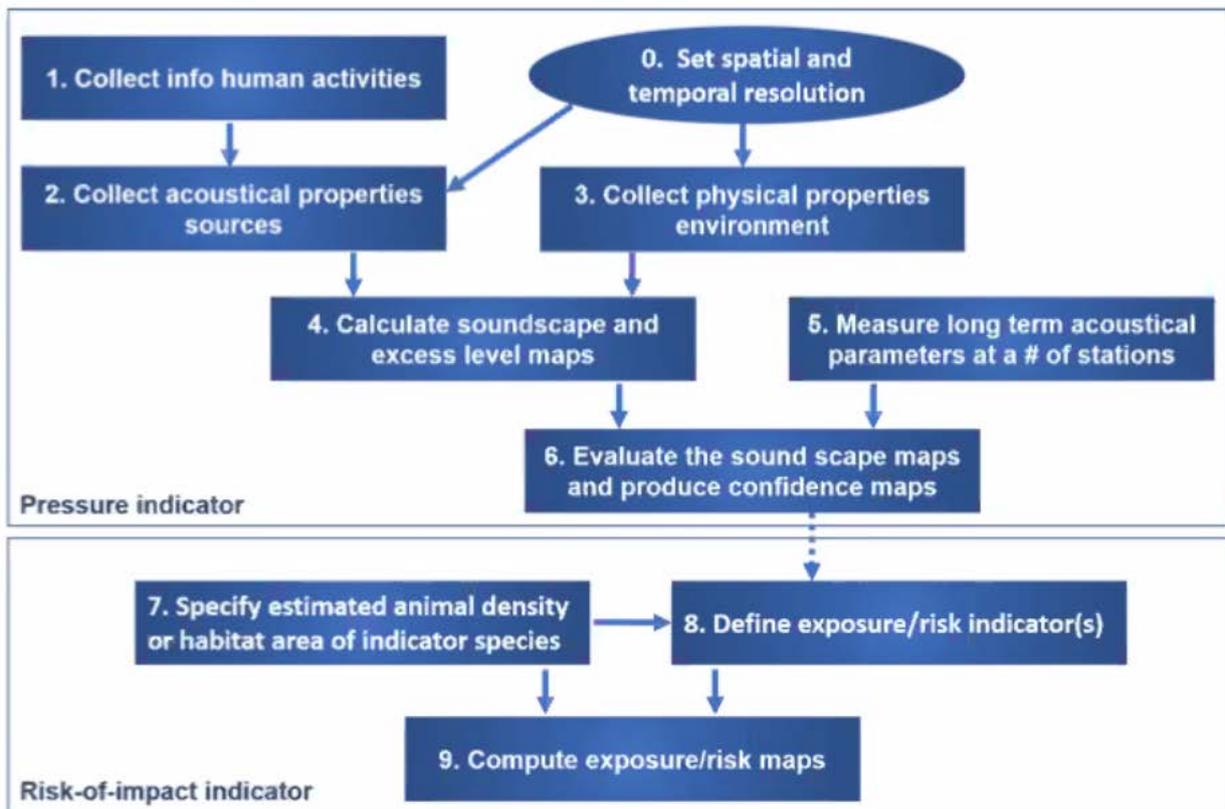


Figure 1 - OSPAR approach on the assessment on continuous noise.

2.3 The Meeting took note that in OSPAR an excess level is defined per frequency, which implies that different species would have different frequencies where these excess levels are to be considered. The question was raised on whether there is a need of a pressure generic indicator for shipping noise due to the number of mammals in the OSPAR area. The Meeting further noted that this may also be the case in the HELCOM area where fish species are also to be considered.

2.4 The Meeting was of the view that the limiting factor in the assessment is not the quality of the acoustic data, but the quality of the biological data available, which makes it hard to use them for assessment purposes.

2.5 The Meeting took note of the encouragement by IOGP for noise groups at regional and EU level to integrate the IPCOP models on the effects of noise at the population level in the assessment process.

2.6 The Meeting discussed issues where further cooperation between HELCOM and OSPAR noise experts in relation to continuous noise indicators and assessment would be relevant and agreed on the following topics:

- a clear definition of metrics and terminology, e.g. excess level, acceptance level and background levels;
- modelling of the effects of continuous noise at population level;
- selection of adequate frequencies for noise sensitive species.

2.7 The Meeting took note that the HELCOM continuous noise database hosted by ICES is now operational and ready for the first data submissions (document 2-2 and Presentation 1).

2.8 The Meeting took note that the possibility of OSPAR joining the HELCOM database will be discussed at the OSPAR EIHA meeting to be held in autumn and that there is a need to get information on the cost for OSPAR countries to join the database.

2.9 The Meeting took note of the clarification by ICES that at this stage of the process, when the uploading of files is being tested, it is difficult to estimate the costs for countries to upload data to the database on a per file basis, as requested by the Netherlands.

2.10 The Meeting noted that The Netherlands is willing to join the HELCOM database.

### **Agenda Item 3      Impulsive noise**

3.1 The Meeting took note of the information on the OSPAR approach in relation to impulsive noise indicator and assessment under development (**Presentation 2**).

3.2 The Meeting welcomed the provision of exposure curves which provide an indication of the exposure risks, and whether the activities that happen and their frequency is acceptable or goes beyond adequate threshold values.

3.3 The Meeting took note of the clarification that the effect on the use of mitigation measures on pile driving activities is shown at the OSPAR area level, whereas these measures are only applied in a few countries.

3.4 The Meeting took note of the German proposal to include injuries in connection to explosions in the assessment.

3.5 The Meeting took note that military activities are underrepresented in the OSPAR assessment, as only few countries provide information on these activities to the register.

3.6 The Meeting took note that for those HELCOM and OSPAR countries being EU members military activities are exempt for requirements to report under the EU MSFD. However, this creates a conflict with the general requirement that countries still need to report on activities causing noise impact, which also includes military activities.

- 3.7 The Meeting took note that there is an OSPAR document being drafted on mitigation measures to be applied to explosions.
- 3.8 The Meeting took note that in the UK active sonar data will be available only if they are declassified. The Meeting further noted that most other countries in HELCOM and OSPAR do not provide any data on military active sonars and welcomed the suggestion by the UK to prepare a document for the national navies where the use of the sonar data is explained, together with experiences from other countries in this regard.
- 3.9 The Meeting took note of the views by Germany on the need to take into consideration the mobility of harbour porpoise when defining reference levels.
- 3.10 The Meeting agreed on the need to have a common approach that fits all species and all regional seas. The Meeting further agreed on the need for HELCOM and OSPAR mammals and fish experts to feed into the assessment process in relation to species distribution.
- 3.11 The Meeting took note that in HELCOM, for the 2018 HOLAS II assessment, a quantitative assessment on impulsive noise was not included. However, it is foreseen that it is included in the HOLAS III assessment, being the initial thinking to test the feasibility of the OSPAR approach in the HELCOM area.
- 3.12 The Meeting discussed GES threshold values and noted that EU TG Noise is to provide advice or suggestions on the issue in one year, thus it is the appropriate timing for Regional Seas Conventions to provide input to the process.
- 3.13 The Meeting agreed on the need of having more examples on the application of the OSPAR methodology to different regions, to enable a subsequent fine-tuning of such methodology. Examples do not have to be conducted using real data, but should consider other species rather than cod, herring, sprat and harbor porpoise.
- 3.14 The Meeting took note of the German examples presented at the last EU TG Noise meeting held on 2 June 2020, which can be found [here](#). These examples will also be considered at the upcoming OSPAR ICG Noise meeting to be held on 16 June 2020.

#### **Agenda Item 4 Update on EU Technical Group on Underwater Noise**

- 4.1 The Meeting took note that the EU TG Noise meeting held a meeting on 2 June 2020, which was of an informative character, and where discussion did not take place.
- 4.2 The Meeting recalled that HELCOM EN-Noise submitted document 2-1 to such EU TG Noise meeting for consideration.
- 4.3 The Meeting took note of the information on relevant deadlines in relation to the EU TG Noise as shared in the EU TG Noise meeting (Figure 2):

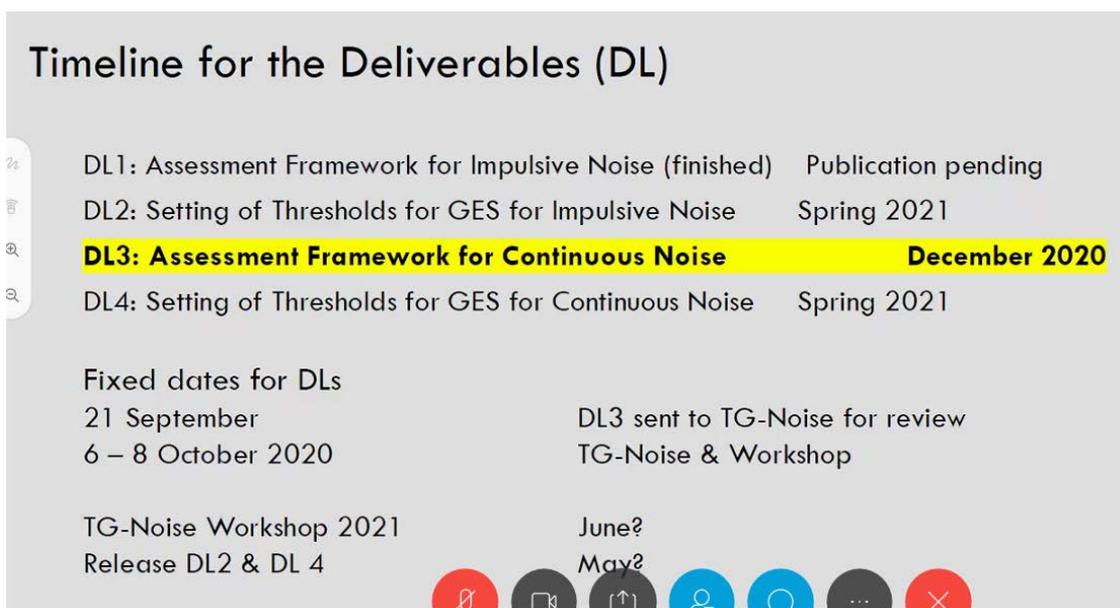


Figure 2 – Timeline for deliverables by the EU TG Noise in 2020-2021.

4.4 The Meeting took note of the information by the Netherlands that there is a drafting group created for the “DL 3 – Assessment framework for continuous noise” which is to be very active in the upcoming months. Both HELCOM EN-Noise and OSPAR ICG-Noise are well represented there.

4.5 The Meeting welcomed the offer by IOGP to investigate whether one of the colleagues working on population modelling could present latest advances on the topic in this type of fora.

4.6 The Meeting took note that IOGP supports the use of the same approach in different Regional Seas Conventions, especially in relation to the terminology used.

4.7 The Meeting took note that another approach to bear in mind is the one developed in the frame of the [QuietMED2 project](#), and also that the chairs of EU TG-Noise are aware of this issue and are working towards a unified approach.

4.8 The Meeting took note that Portugal supports the EU TG Noise approach, which is a regional based approach, in relation to the exposure assessment.

#### **Agenda Item 5 Any other business**

5.1 The Meeting did not discuss any other business.

#### **Agenda Item 6 Report of the Meeting and follow-up**

6.1 The Meeting agreed on the relevance of holding these Joint Sessions on an annual basis. The Meeting further agreed to arrange the next Joint Session in 2021, date tbc at a later stage.

6.2 The final outcome of the Joint Session, together with documents and presentations considered by the Joint Session will be made available on the OSPAR and HELCOM meeting sites.

## Annex 1 List of participants

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