



Document title	Underwater Noise - The neglected threat to marine life. Support to Draft HELCOM RAP Noise
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Background

Anthropogenic underwater noise is one of major conservation problems having serious impacts on marine species in all oceans including the Baltic Sea. Noise comes from offshore construction, transport as well as resource exploration and extraction, and adds to the cumulative environmental impacts from other anthropogenic pressures. The EU MSFD requires anthropogenic noise to be at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment. However, the focus to date has been on monitoring with no widely agreed ways yet to assess whether GES is being achieved with respect to underwater noise. While such assessments are ongoing, there is considerable scope for reducing noise at source, which is usually the most effective way of reducing impacts to marine species and habitats.

Acknowledging this, the Ministers of the Environment of the Baltic coastal countries and the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries agreed already back in [2013](#) *"that the level of ambient and distribution of impulsive sounds in the Baltic Sea should not have negative impact on marine life and that human activities that are assessed to result in negative impacts on marine life should be carried out only if relevant mitigation measures are in place"*. Following this decision, in [2018](#) HELCOM Contracting Parties have agreed *"to develop 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"*.

With reference to the improved [draft Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise](#) submitted to this meeting, CCB would like to share the paper "[Risch, D. et al. 2020. Underwater Noise - The neglected threat to marine life](#)" to support the RAP and to answer some of the Contracting Parties' concerns about knowledge and scientific evidence on the impacts of underwater noise. In this paper, the main noise sources and their impacts on the marine environment are summarised, shortcomings in current underwater noise regulation and mitigation are identified, and finally ways to more effectively implement current legislation in order to apply concrete measures to protect our oceans from excessive noise are recommended. Such measures include *i.a.*, using risk maps and noise budgets to address cumulative noise impacts, setting noise thresholds immediately, preventing any widespread increase in noise, particularly by reducing and preventing noise at source, managing noise at the ecosystem level through spatio-temporal measures, and regional and interregional coordination and collaboration.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the paper with reference to the discussions on adoption of the RAP and further measures to mitigate underwater noise within the BSAP update.