OSPAR COMMISSION

for the protection and conservation of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic

CALL FOR TENDER

"OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Underwater Noise - technical assistance for 2027"

1. Name, addresses and contact point(s):

Official name: OSPAR Commission

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Applications must be received by 25 November 2026, 19:00 GMT.

The Secretariat will acknowledge receipt of your response by email. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within a few days, please contact the Secretariat by phone to check that your response has been received.

Please note that the Secretariat does not actively review quarantined emails.

2. Title attributed to the contract

OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Underwater Noise – technical assistance for 2027

3. Description of the contract

Overview

The OSPAR Commission is an international intergovernmental organisation established to protect the marine environment in the North-East Atlantic Ocean. It consists of representatives of the Contracting Parties: that is, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union. The Commission is administered by a Secretariat based in London.

To deliver the aims of the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES 2030) OSPAR is developing Regional Action Plans as coordinated frameworks to reduce or eliminate anthropogenic pressures in the OSPAR maritime area and work on the protection and recovery of marine species and habitats. To date OSPAR has issued Regional Action Plans on marine litter, underwater noise, marine birds, and, most recently, benthic habitats. The OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Underwater Noise (RAP-Noise) was adopted by OSPAR Contracting Parties in June 2025.

In fact, underwater noise is recognised as one of the main pressures in the marine environment. It includes all sounds produced by anthropogenic activities.

The RAP-Noise identifies the most important actions to be implemented on a regional scale to reduce anthropogenic underwater noise to levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment within the North-East Atlantic. It will support the implementation of Operational Objective S8.01 and cross-cutting objective SX.O1 of the NEAES 2030.

The action plan will be implemented from 2025 to 2035 and bring together the best from the Contracting Parties' scientific and policy communities. Targeting the most important sources of underwater noise, 8 prioritised actions will address overall levels of noise pollution as well as specific sources of this pollution by developing harmonised targets, standards and approaches towards the reduction of anthropogenic noise. The actions focus on targets and thresholds, spatial planning, commercial shipping, geophysical surveys, constructions and operation of marine infrastructure, UXO disposal, other underwater noise sources and outreach and engagement. To date, seven out of eight actions of the RAP-Noise are active. OSPAR will actively engage with relevant stakeholders and communities to support the implementation of its ambitious action plan.

The implementation of the RAP-Noise is coordinated through an Intersessional Correspondence Group on underwater noise (ICG-Noise) which reports to the OSPAR Committee on Environment Impacts of Human Activities (EIHA). ICG-Noise generally reviews progress on the implementation of the RAP-Noise once a year at its in-person meeting. ICG-Noise is supported by the OSPAR Secretariat as far as resources allow.

The provision of technical assistance was requested by ICG-Noise members to deliver the RAP-Noise. While each action of the RAP-Noise is, or will be, led by one or more Contracting Parties, the technical assistance function will help organise the work to deliver each action, produce meeting documents and draft OSPAR measures and other agreements. Given its cross-cutting nature, technical assistance could be of particular added value for the implementation of action 8 of the RAP-Noise focused on outreach and engagement with stakeholders.

Technical assistance will make sure the OSPAR procedures, agreed formats for each type of document and corresponding timeline are met to ensure that actions are well coordinated and reported to relevant OSPAR groups. To this end, the technical assistance will facilitate the organisation of half-yearly meetings bringing together all leads responsible for taking forward each action, in order to ensure dialogue and coordination for the implementation of the RAP-Noise. The technical assistance, together with the Secretariat, will also support the co-convenors of ICG-Noise to prepare and manage ICG-Noise meetings.

Further background on underwater noise can be found on the dedicated webpage on the OSPAR website as well as in the thematic and indicator assessments provided for OSPAR's 2023 Quality Status Report here.

Further information about the OSPAR Commission can be obtained from the Commission's website at www.ospar.org.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this contract is to provide a technical assistance service to the convenors and members of ICG-Noise to facilitate the implementation of the OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Underwater Noise (RAP-Noise). The assistance will cover the period 01 January 2027 to 31 December 2027.

The project has 3 main objectives:

a. Maintain a programme management plan to monitor and support delivery of all RAP-Noise actions;

b. Support the implementation of individual RAP-Noise actions; and

c. Support the meetings of the action leads of the RAP-Noise actions and ICG-Noise.

4. Tasks and products

Tenderers are required to demonstrate in the response how they will fulfill the following tasks:

a. Programme management plan

- Keeping a RAP-Noise programme management plan up to date and reporting to ICG-Noise;
- Supporting the Secretariat in reporting relevant information into the NEAES Implementation Plan.

b. Implementation of individual RAP-Noise actions

- Supporting action leads in the implementation of the RAP-Noise actions;
- Initiating the implementation of action 8 of the RAP-Noise, in conjunction with the other active actions of the RAP-Noise;
- Providing administrative and technical support, including record keeping, for the organisation of meetings and workshops in relation to the RAP-Noise actions;
- Supporting the processes for collecting and collating information (e.g. questionnaires, literature research, etc.);
- Supporting the drafting of meeting documents, OSPAR measures and other guidance or technical reports;
- Supporting stakeholder dialogues with specific industries addressed by RAP-Noise actions;
- Helping to prepare OSPAR documentation and communication materials;
- Ensuring efficient communication and coordination between actions.

c. Support of ICG-Noise and action leads meetings and provision of other advice and support

- Providing administrative and technical support for the ICG-Noise and action leads meetings;
- Support on-going coordination with other European regional seas conventions – information exchange and alignment of actions;
- Act as liaison point for relevant international research projects and initiatives;
- Provision of other advice and support to the ICG-Noise Co-Convenors if required, subject to the availability of resources within the contract.

5. Duration of the contract and timing of deliverables

Start date: 01/01/27

End date: 31/12/27

6. Type of tender:

Open

7. Estimated level of provision of technical assistance

The agreed level of support will be based on an average number of person-days assistance per month. It is envisaged that the number of days support in any given month would be 4 and not exceeding in the region of 40 days per annum, and up to an expected maximum value of £26,000, excluding VAT. The consultant will be expected to maintain time sheets providing evidence of the support provided.

The assistance should be provided by one individual to maximise synergies across all the RAP-Noise activities. However, it is recognised that there could be a need for additional back-up to ensure a consistent and adequate level of support throughout the contract period.

Where travel is necessary for the purposes of the delivery of the technical assistance it shall be agreed with the Secretariat. Reasonable travel costs and subsistence shall be reimbursed by the Secretariat and should not be included in the tender.

8. Exclusion criteria for selection of offers

Contracts may only be awarded when the tender comes from a tenderer who is not excluded from access to the market due to a situation of exclusion and who meets the selection criteria set out in these contract documents.

The contracting authority may carry out an early examination of tenders.

The tenderer shall submit a UK or a UK equivalent Procurement Document such as an European Single Procurement (ESPD) with their tender. A form is available on the website for those bidders who do not have an ESPD or equivalent.

Mandatory and discretionary exclusions criteria set out as in Schedule 6 and 7 of the Procurement Act 2023 (Act), England and Wales will apply.

9. Selection criteria and weighting:

Criteria	***Weighting (%)***
Understanding of, and relevance to OSPAR's requirements	25
Clarity and content of proposed assistance services	25
Contractor's expertise, experience	25
Value for money	25

10. Management, delivery and completion of the work

The OSPAR Secretariat will act as project manager. The ICG-Noise Co-Convenors will act as steering group.

The contractor will be required to attend ICG-Noise meetings throughout the duration of the contract (the first meeting from 26 to 28 January 2027 and a second meeting to be confirmed in September 2027), as well as two online meetings of the experts leading the RAP-Noise actions (dates to be confirmed).

All deliverables must be submitted to the OSPAR Secretariat. The consultant will be expected to provide a full financial report summarising the assistance provided in relation to the above tasks and providing evidence of effectiveness (for example, feedback from action leads).

11. Information required in the tender response

The response to this call should incorporate the following elements:

1. Demonstration of understanding of the issue and requirements;
2. Description of how technical assistance would be provided;
3. Examples of relevant previous experience;
4. Skills and expertise;

5. Project budget breakdown;

6. Name, address, full details of a primary contact;

7. Copy of the Ultimate Beneficial Ownership or equivalent.