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# A NEW COLLECTIVE ACTION PLAN TO REDUCE UNDERWATER NOISE

## Why is this important?

Underwater noise is recognised as one of the main pressures in the marine environment. It includes all sounds produced by anthropogenic activities. Anthropogenic underwater noise, whether continuous or impulsive, can interfere with the hearing or physiology of marine animals or cause behavioural disturbance or injury.

In the OSPAR Maritime Area, the dominant source of continuous underwater noise is shipping; while impulsive noise is generated by activities such as by geosciences surveys, pile driving and military activities.

The incidence and intensity of noise pollution is expected to increase in the North-East Atlantic.

## What is OSPAR doing?

In 2025, OSPAR is adopting a dedicated Regional Action Plan to reduce anthropogenic underwater noise to levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment.

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 will 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.

OSPAR will actively engage with relevant stakeholders and communities to support the implementation of its ambitious action plan.

## How will this benefit the North-East Atlantic?

Underwater noise is often a transnational phenomenon. Sound underwater can propagate over very large distances, and many marine species have habitats that cross international boundaries. Therefore, management of underwater noise can best be organised through regional and international co-operation, and collaboration between OSPAR's Contracting Parties.

The action plan will bring together knowledge and expertise to fill in evidence, policy and implementation gaps. It will add value to other existing processes, such as marine spatial planning, and collective efforts to achieve a productive and sustainably used ocean.

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