

Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach  
Fourth Meeting  
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**Agenda Item 4      Coordination and information related to the implementation of the ecosystem approach and related policies**

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**MONITORING OF UNDERWATER NOISE**

The second meeting of HELCOM GEAR (2/2012) discussed the knowledge needs as regards the underwater noise and recalled that the HELCOM 2010 Moscow Ministerial Declaration includes a decision to develop common methodologies and appropriate indicators, to facilitate national and coordinated monitoring of noise and identification of sources of noise. The meeting invited the LIFE+ BIAS project to consider whether the project would be able to deliver any preliminary or interim information of the underwater noise in order for the group to consider possible next steps prior to the Ministerial Meeting.

The EU MSFD Technical Subgroup (TSG) under the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) for further development of Descriptor 11 Noise/Energy has focused on clarifying the purpose, use and limitation of the indicators for underwater noise and described methodology that would be unambiguous, effective and practicable. In 2012, TSG Noise delivered its [first report](#) of the impulsive and the ambient noise indicators.

This document presents the second report of TSG Noise, called *Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas* (Interim Guidance Report), which is published in three parts: Summary (**Attachment 1**), Specification (**Attachment 2**) and Background information (**Attachment 3**). The report provides the information needed to commence the monitoring required to implement this aspect of MSFD. TSG Noise has focused on ambiguities, uncertainties and other shortcomings that may hinder monitoring initiatives and has provided solutions, and describes methodology for monitoring both impulsive and ambient noise in such a way that information needed for management and policy can be collected in a cost-effective way.

The LIFE+ [BIAS project](#) (*Baltic Sea Information on the Acoustic Soundscape*) has a potential to assist the participating countries in collecting information and establishing the monitoring of underwater noise. The project is expected to initiate monitoring of underwater noise based on the TSG Guidance Report, develop a model for distribution and intensity of noise in the entire Baltic Sea and deliver the first soundscape maps within a couple of years. Several HELCOM Contracting Parties are partners of the project (see **Attachment 3**, page 32 for further description and **Attachment 4** for contact details).

Contracting Parties are invited to inform the Meeting of their work on underwater noise and intentions to establish monitoring of underwater noise.

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the report
- consider any points for regional co-operation in the monitoring and assessment of underwater noise, and
- discuss and advise on the way forward.

# **European Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

## **MONITORING GUIDANCE FOR UNDERWATER NOISE IN EUROPEAN SEAS**

### **PART I - Executive Summary & Recommendations**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Technical Subgroup on Underwater Noise and  
other forms of energy (TSG Noise)**

Interim Guidance Report

May 2013

This report can be cited as follows:

Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas - 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Technical Subgroup on Underwater noise (TSG Noise). Part I – Executive Summary. Interim Guidance Report. May, 2013.

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Interim Guidance Report:

TSG Noise was tasked to deliver guidance so that European Member States could initiate programmes for underwater noise monitoring. As monitoring must be operational by 2014, first guidance was required by spring 2013. The Interim Guidance report provides the basis for the noise monitoring programme however since new information continues to be compiled TSG Noise can review and update the guidance later in 2013. In addition, the results and feedback that may arise at the training workshop (preliminary planned now for Autumn 2013) can be incorporated. This also means the inclusion of new findings into the design of the register for impulsive noise generating activities, and from currently running initiatives around the Baltic Sea, The Netherlands, Germany and Ireland, for ambient noise. For this reason this report has been designated as an interim guidance until Autumn 2013.

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**Disclaimer:** This interim guidance report has been prepared by a group of experts nominated by European Member States and Stakeholders. It provides recommendations based on technical advice and options for the operational implementation of monitoring Marine Strategy Framework Directive Descriptor 11 on Underwater Noise. It does not constitute an official opinion of the European Commission, nor of the participating Institutions and European Member States.

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## Summary

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requires European Member States (MS) to develop strategies that should lead to programmes of measures that achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in European Seas. As an essential step reaching good environmental status, MS should establish **monitoring programmes for assessment**, enabling the state of the marine waters concerned to be evaluated on a regular basis.

In 2010, in Commission Decision 2010/477/EU, criteria and methodological standards on GES of marine waters were published. Two indicators were described for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy): Indicator 11.1.1 on low and mid frequency impulsive sounds and Indicator 11.2.1 on continuous low frequency sound (ambient noise).

As a follow up to the Commission Decision, the Marine Directors in 2010 agreed to establish a Technical Subgroup (TSG) under the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) for further development of Descriptor 11 Noise/Energy. TSG (Underwater) Noise in 2011 focused on clarifying the purpose, use and limitation of the indicators and described methodology that would be unambiguous, effective and practicable. In February 2012, TSG Noise delivered its first report [Van der Graaf et al., 2012]<sup>1</sup>. For both the impulsive and the ambient noise indicators significant progress was made to their practical implementation, and most ambiguities were solved.

In December 2011, EU Marine Directors requested the continuation of TSG Noise, and the group was tasked with recommending how MS might best make the indicators of the Commission Decision operational. TSG Noise was asked first to provide monitoring guidance that could be used by MS in establishing monitoring schemes for underwater noise in their marine waters. Further work includes providing suggestions for (future) target setting; for addressing the biological impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise and to evaluate new information on the effects of sound on marine biota, with the view to considering indicators of noise effects.

The present document is **Part I** of the *Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas* (Interim Guidance Report) and provides MS with the information needed to commence the monitoring required to implement this aspect of MSFD. TSG Noise has focused on ambiguities, uncertainties and other shortcomings that may hinder monitoring initiatives and has provided solutions, and describes methodology for monitoring both impulsive and ambient noise in such a way that information needed for management and policy can be collected in a cost-effective way. TSG Noise has no doubt that further issues will arise once monitoring starts, but hopes the principles laid out in this guidance will help resolve these.

The Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise is structured, as follows:

- **Part I: Executive Summary & Recommendations,**
- Part II: Monitoring Guidance Specifications, and
- Part III: Background Information and Annexes.

Part I of the Monitoring Guidance is the executive summary for policy and decision makers responsible for the adoption and implementation of MSFD at national level. It provides the key results and recommendations presented in Part II that support the practical guidance for MS and will, enable assessment of the current level of underwater noise.

Part II, is the main report of the Monitoring Guidance, that provides the specifications for the monitoring of underwater noise, with a dedicated section on impulsive noise (Criterion 11.1 of the Commission Decision) and ambient noise (Criterion 11.2 of the Commission Decision). It provides a detailed guide to those who will implement the monitoring/modelling, and noise registration technical specifications.

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<sup>1</sup> The first TSG Noise Report (27 February 2012) is available online:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/MSFD\\_reportTSG\\_Noise.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/MSFD_reportTSG_Noise.pdf)

Part III, the background information and annexes, is not part of the guidance, but is added for additional information, examples and references that support the Monitoring Guidance specifications.

## 1. Introduction to Underwater Noise

In the EC Decision 2010/477/EU on criteria and methodological standards on GES of marine waters, two indicators were published for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy) of the MSFD 2008/56/EC. These are: Indicator 11.1.1 on 'low and mid frequency impulsive sounds' and Indicator 11.2.1 on 'Continuous low frequency sound (ambient noise)'. As a follow up to the EC Decision, the Marine Directors in 2010 agreed to establish a TSG under the WG GES for further development of Descriptor 10 Marine Litter and Descriptor 11 Noise/Energy. For practical reasons Directorate-General Environment (DG ENV) decided that the work would be carried out by two separate groups. This report compiles the recommendations of TSG Noise. Text box 1 shows the extract of the EC Decision specifically for the indicators of Descriptor 11.

### **Text Box 1: Extract of the indicators for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy) from EC Decision 2010/477/EU**

**Descriptor 11: Introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment.**

Together with underwater noise, which is highlighted throughout Directive 2008/56/EC, other forms of energy input have the potential to impact on components of marine ecosystems, such as thermal energy, electromagnetic fields and light. Additional scientific and technical progress is still required to support the further development of criteria related to this descriptor, including in relation to impacts of introduction of energy on marine life, relevant noise and frequency levels (which may need to be adapted, where appropriate, subject to the requirement of regional cooperation). At the current stage, the main orientations for the measurement of underwater noise have been identified as a first priority in relation to assessment and monitoring, subject to further development, including in relation to mapping. Anthropogenic sounds may be of short duration (e.g. impulsive such as from seismic surveys and piling for wind farms and platforms, as well as explosions) or be long lasting (e.g. continuous such as dredging, shipping and energy installations) affecting organisms in different ways. Most commercial activities entailing high-level noise levels affecting relatively broad areas are executed under regulated conditions subject to a license. This creates the opportunity for coordinating coherent requirements for measuring such loud impulsive sounds.

#### 11.1. Distribution in time and place of loud, low and mid frequency impulsive sounds

- Proportion of days and their distribution within a calendar year over areas of a determined surface, as well as their spatial distribution, in which anthropogenic sound sources exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals measured as Sound Exposure Level (in dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa 2 .s) or as peak sound pressure level (in dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa peak) at one metre, measured over the frequency band 10 Hz to 10 kHz (11.1.1)

#### 11.2. Continuous low frequency sound

- Trends in the ambient noise level within the 1/3 octave bands 63 and 125 Hz (centre frequency) (re 1  $\mu$ Pa RMS; average noise level in these octave bands over a year) measured by observation stations and/or with the use of models if appropriate (11.2.1).

### 1.1 Types of underwater noise

There are many kinds of anthropogenic energy that human activities introduce into the marine environment including sound, light and other electromagnetic fields, heat and radioactive energy. Among these, the most widespread and invasive kind of anthropogenic energy is underwater sound. It is likely that these levels, and associated effects on the marine ecosystem have been increasing since the advent of steam-driven ships, although there have been very few studies that have quantified such a change. The numbers of anthropogenic electromagnetic fields are increasing due to the increasing number of power cables crossing our seas but these emissions are relatively localised to the cables. Light and heat emissions are also relatively localised, but may have significant local effects (Tasker *et al.* 2010).

Energy input can occur on many scales in both space and time. Anthropogenic sounds may be of short duration (e.g. impulsive) or be long lasting (e.g. continuous); impulsive sounds may however be repeated at intervals (duty cycle) and such repetition may become diffuse with distance and reverberation and become indistinguishable from continuous noise. Higher frequency sounds transmit less well in the marine environment whereas lower frequency sounds can travel far. In summary, there is great variability in transmission of sound in the marine environment.

Marine organisms that are exposed to noise can be adversely affected both on a short timescale (acute effect) and on a long timescale (permanent or chronic effects). Adverse effects can be subtle (e.g. temporary reduction in hearing sensitivity, behavioural effects) or obvious (e.g. worst case, death). These adverse effects can be widespread (as opposed to local for other forms of energy) and, following the recommendations of Tasker *et al.* (2009), the EC decided in September 2010 that the two indicators for underwater noise listed in Text Box 1 should be used in describing GES (EC Decision 2010/477/EU on criteria and methodological standards on GES). This interim guidance report therefore focuses largely on providing guidance for monitoring these indicators of underwater sound rather than on other sources of energy.



## 2. TSG Noise Recommendations

### 2.1 Monitoring guidance for impulsive noise

This chapter contains recommendations provided by the TSG Noise for the establishment of monitoring programmes of **impulsive noise** as covered by the EU MSFD indicator 11.1.1. The basic principle of the MSFD addresses the ecosystem rather than individual animals or species. This indicator illustrates the cumulative impact of activities, rather than that of individual projects or programmes (dealt with by other EU legislation). Effects of localised singular activities are therefore not covered, and this indicator on its own is not intended, nor is it sufficient, to manage singular events. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) can be used to assess and, where necessary, limit the environmental impacts of individual projects.

*Indicator 11.1.1 on low and midfrequency impulsive sounds:*

*The proportion of days and their distribution within a calendar year, over geographical locations whose shape and area are to be determined, and their spatial distribution in which source level or suitable proxy of anthropogenic sound sources, measured over the frequency band 10 Hz to 10 kHz, exceeds a value that is likely to entail significant impact on marine animals (11.1.1).*

For further considerations and explanation, see the 1<sup>st</sup> TSG report [Van der Graaf et al., 2012].

The impact that is addressed by Indicator 11.1.1 is “considerable” displacement. This is the displacement of a significant proportion of individuals over a relevant time period and spatial scale. The indicator addresses the cumulative impact of sound generating activities and possible displacement associated.

The purpose of this indicator is to assess the pressure on the environment by making available an overview of all low and mid-frequency, impulsive sound sources over a period of one year throughout regional seas. This will provide MS with an overview of the environmental pressures from these sources, which have not been previously measured.

#### 2.1.1 Set-up a Noise Register

A first step is to establish the current level and trend of these impulsive sounds. This should be done by setting up a **register of the occurrence of these impulsive sounds**. Such a noise register may be used to underlie a relatively coarse scale map. The temporal scale of the map is one day, while the proposed spatial scale is of sea blocks of approximately 10 nmi x 5 nmi.

Seismic surveying, pile-driving, explosives, sonar working at relevant frequencies and some acoustic deterrent devices are the **most important sound-sources that should be considered for inclusion in the register**. There are additional sources of possible concern (e.g. boomers, sparkers, scientific echo sounders). Since a registry that leaves out part of the sound sources is not useful if the aim is to address cumulative effects of all sources of impulsive noise, and therefore it is recommended that information on all sources should be included in the registry. TSG Noise therefore suggest that data on explosions and from activities of which the sole purpose is defence or national security should be included in the register, on a voluntary basis, but notes that this is a national policy issue.

The **main items in the register**, needed to derive the amount of pulse-block days (the number of days that in an area (block) a certain threshold (pulse) is exceeded) as required in the text of the Commission Decision, are:

- Pulse-generating activity
- Day
- Location
- Source level

Once a register is established, it will be possible to determine the coarse scale spatial and temporal distribution of impulsive noise sources. This quantified assessment of impulsive noise sources could be used in future to determine policy targets. It should also be possible to establish a baseline of “current condition”.

Minimum noise thresholds have been defined for low and mid-frequency sources as a basis for including sources in the register.

For impact pile-drivers and multiple explosions no minimum threshold should be used and all pile-driving activities and all use of multiple explosions at a single site should be registered.

For sonar, airguns, acoustic deterrents and single explosions, minimum thresholds should be used for uptake in the registers.

The thresholds that were derived and recommended are specified in Part II of the monitoring guidance and will ensure that all sources that have a potential for significant population level effect will be included in the register. However, the use of these relatively low thresholds will result in sources being registered that actually have a relatively low potential for impact, while there are more powerful sources that are likely to have a much greater, potential impact. There is a need for more detail in the register than only the temporal and spatial scales, but also other information, of which the source level is the most important. If this information is available it should be recorded and so that it can be used to enhance the register. This will include recording activities to assess and evaluate the total pressure from impulsive sources. In a later phase the register may serve as a management tool.

If Member States wish to improve the quality and usability of the register, it is recommended that additional information such as source properties level or proxy should be added to the register. This will improve the accuracy of assessing the impact of anthropogenic sound sources on the marine environment. For more detailed specifications please refer to Part II of this Monitoring Guidance.

### **2.1.2 Interpretation of results, thresholds and targets**

For this indicator it is recommended to use the **reference state** as a baseline, i.e. a state where there is negligible population displacement level impact from anthropogenic noise. This is a zero-line, e.g. no significant displacement (where ‘no significant displacement’ means ‘no significant displacement caused by man-made sound’).

Once the register is set-up one of the first applications will be to determine the actual level and distribution of impulsive noise. This level can be used in future to determine policy targets and is thus proposed as the baseline.

There is presently insufficient knowledge to determine when too much disturbance would compromise GES. TSG Noise stresses that setting a realistic target is only possible once the baseline (i.e. actual level) is known and is contingent on the availability of information on the impacts of noise. TSG Noise will continue to work in 2013 and 2014 to provide advice on **thresholds and targets**. This advice will be on the type of target MS should consider. Setting the threshold level is up to the MS themselves.

### **2.1.3 Options for addressing spatial scale**

There are **two spatial units** that should be used in the analysis. The first is the blocks or grid size used for registering the data. The second is the assessment areas used for the analysis.

In the first report of the TSG Noise, options for addressing spatial scale were set out. It was recommended that one grid size should be used by all MS. For practical reasons TSG Noise proposes to use standard hydrocarbon licensing blocks for collection of data for seismic surveys, since most MS commonly use these licensing blocks. Use of these blocks may be practicable when collecting data for other relevant sources, but sometimes other approaches may be needed.

For the analysis of the data the use of these blocks may be practicable, but MS should realize that the actual size of the area impacted by a source may vary (most notably depending on source level). Making use of standard blocks to describe the impacted area may not be accurate enough. This can be better evaluated in the future using actual monitoring data.

## 2.2 Monitoring guidance for ambient noise

This chapter provides a guide for **the monitoring of ambient noise** as covered by the EU MSFD indicator 11.2.1.

To make indicator 11.2.1. operational and to comply with the Commission Decision of 2010 (CD): to monitor trends, advice on scope and optimal approach are provided.

*Indicator 11.2.1: Trends in the annual average of the squared sound pressure associated with ambient noise in each of two third octave bands, one centred at 63 Hz and the other at 125 Hz, expressed as a level in decibels, in units of dB re 1 µPa, either measured directly at observation stations, or inferred from a model used to interpolate between or extrapolate from measurements at observation stations [Van der Graaf, 2012].*

To reach the overarching aim of the MSFD: ensure that Good Environmental Status is reached, trends only are not sufficient. Trends indicate whether the actual pressure on the environment (e.g., shipping noise) is rising or falling, but to describe GES, actual levels, based on wider overview of the area, created by combination of modelling and mapping will be needed.

The **combined use of measurements and models** (and possibly sound maps) is the best way for Member States to ascertain levels and trends of ambient noise in the relevant frequency bands. Member States should be careful to balance modelling with appropriate measurements. The first TSG Noise report [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012] describes standards that measurement equipment should comply with, along with comments about possible shortcomings of commercially available equipment. Models also require standards and definitions needed to clarify what is an appropriate model and what is not.

As mentioned before, the CD does not require that MS describe the complete noise field in their waters; a limited number of monitoring stations (measurement locations) would suffice. However it is considered that the use of models will contribute directly to effective ambient noise monitoring and assessment against an indicator, but that measurements are necessary to provide ground truth at some specific locations. There are several reasons to use modelling:

1. The use of modelling to create noise maps facilitates trend estimation in a more cost-effective manner.
2. The use of models identifies trends for different source types, by directly identifying the cause of any fluctuations thus facilitating mitigation action.
3. Models permit the removal of selected sources if considered not causing a departure from GES (such as natural sources of sound, both biotic and abiotic (e.g. lightning)).
4. The use of models would provide Member States with a better overview of actual levels and distribution of levels across its sea area, and thereby identify departures from GES.

In addition, modelling has a number of advantages that could contribute to a greater understanding of the likely impacts of noise in the future (see for more detail Part II).

The **use of models and sound maps** is not an extra requirement to the measuring of ambient noise, but rather can be a way of achieving compliance with the MSFD and CD, while obtaining better results at lower costs, than if measurements alone are made. However, Member States should be careful to not shift the balance too much in favour of modelling *only* but ensure that modelling will be validated or corrected with measurements.

The use of mapping has some history and in implementing the MSFD and one can make use of previous experience. Relevant EU regulation is summarised in part II providing some useful background for the MSFD.

## 2.2.1 Outline of the monitoring programme

TSG Noise advises **Member States within a sub region to work together to establish an ambient noise monitoring system**. No precise locations for deploying equipment necessary to monitor relevant frequency bands of ambient noise have yet been defined. However, TSG Noise is providing a set of guidelines for **monitoring strategy** and **guidance for reporting results**.

It is the responsibility of the MS to define exact locations for the monitoring of Indicator 11.2.1.

The indicator is a pressure-indicator that should be used to document trends and not to provide a complete coverage of all noise for the area of interest. If a trend is detected in an area, it should also provide evidence about the trend in other areas (for example an MPA). Thus a **limited set of monitoring stations per region / basin should suffice** to satisfy the requirements of the indicator. This is dependent on available information regarding spatial distribution of activities in each region. In deep water regions, a single measurement point (at low frequency) may be representative of a wider region, because low frequency sound propagates well in deep water, in shallow water to a lesser degree. But still, in deep water, there may be factors effecting the measured values - sound channels are likely to occur, together with convergence zones.

Since measurement stations can be very costly TSG Noise has considered whether a limited number of measurement stations per basin can be sufficient. For optimal planning of the placement of measurement stations, a **monitoring strategy** will be required. The purpose of the measurements is to give input for modelling; provide confidence to model predictions that are used to extrapolate to other parts of each basin; or the measurement can be used directly as the representative value for a region, leading to different measurement strategies.

The monitoring should focus on **shipping noise and individual ship noise assessment**. Placement of measurement stations near a shipping lane is recommended in order to record a period of time where a single vessel is dominating the noise. Processing shall then extract directivity patterns of individual vessels.

The **arithmetic mean** should be used to establish **average ambient noise levels**. The value found will be dominated by the noisiest contribution. Therefore, monitoring in the established high pressure areas (such as commercial traffic lanes) will be emphasised by this contribution. Any other contribution, especially contribution at the regional scale will be de-emphasised. As a consequence, significant pressure fluctuation at a region scale will be disregarded by only listening near traffic lanes.

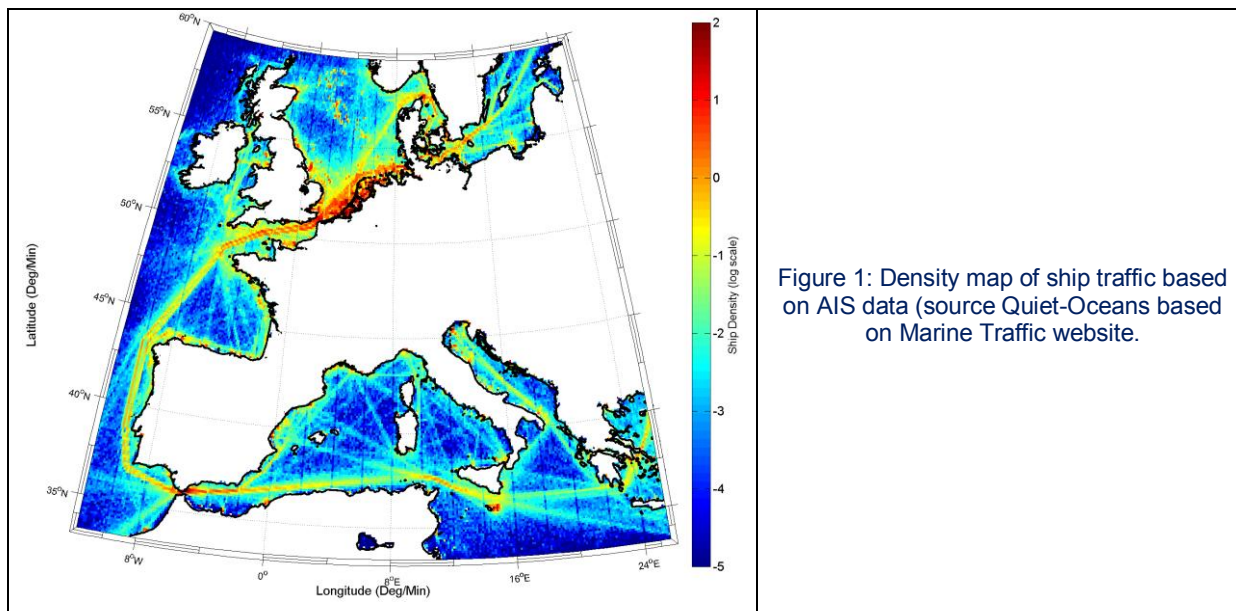
In order to establish the statistical significance of the trend, additional statistical information about the distribution is necessary. Until better advice becomes available, it is recommended that the **complete distribution be retained for this purpose in bins of 1 dB**.

Since sound propagates over large distances, especially for the low frequencies in the context of the MSFD, the noise contribution from any major traffic lanes spreads at long distances. Therefore, **remotely placed hydrophones** would be able to capture the diversity of noise contributions in a more balanced way, even other components of shipping noise that would have been masked otherwise. Such monitoring strategy is likely to be suitable for representative monitoring at a regional scale.

Considering that, at the low frequencies of the MSFD, any piece of European waters is in the noise footprint of a shipping lane, it is **recommended an initial set of rules for the placement of measurement devices** (in order of importance):

- 1- With relatively few measurement stations per basin, these should be at locations suitable for validating the model prediction used for interpolation and extrapolation. Monitoring may be more cost effective if existing stations are used for monitoring other oceanographic features.
- 2- In deep water, devices should be placed in areas of low shipping density. The range to shipping lanes may be greater in deep water as low frequency sound can propagate long distances.
- 3- Place one hydrophone close to the bottom (a priori subject to the lower variability of noise levels). If budgets allow for a second hydrophone, it should be placed at the depth where the lowest value for the yearly averaged sound speed is expected (if that information is available), and in deep water that depth should be preferred over the seabed or the sea surface.

- 4- Consider special topography and bathymetry effects upon acoustics e.g. when there are pronounced coastal landscapes or islands/archipelagos it may be considered to place hydrophones on opposite sides,
- 5- In waters subjected to trawling, use locations that are protected from fishing activities or locations where trawling is avoided due bottom features (e.g. underwater structures/wrecks);
- 6- Consider, and if possible avoid being close to, the presence of other sound sources that might interfere with measurements e.g. offshore activities like oil and gas exploration.
- 7- Any mooring has to be designed for noise measurements.



### 3. Conclusions

The main recommendations of the interim guidance report for MS regarding underwater noise monitoring and registration are presented for both the impulsive and ambient noise indicators as follow:

#### 3.1 Monitoring Guidance Impulsive Noise

*Interpretation and aim:* TSG Noise agreed that the impact that is addressed by this indicator is “considerable” displacement. This is the displacement of a significant proportion of individuals over a relevant time period and spatial scale. The indicator addresses the cumulative impact of sound generating activities and possible displacement associated, rather than that of individual projects.

*Sound Register:* A **first step is to establish** the current level and trend of impulsive noise. This should be done by setting up a **register of the occurrence of the impulsive noise**.

*TSG Noise recommends for impulsive noise:* TSG Noise recommends that MS work together in setting up a register, both at regional seas level and the EU level. Seismic surveying, pile-driving, explosives, sonar working at relevant frequencies and some acoustic deterrent devices are the **most important sound-sources that should be considered for inclusion in the register**. There are additional sources of possible concern (e.g. boomers, sparkers, scientific echo sounders). It is recommended that information on all such sources should be included in the registry.

The **main items in the noise register**, needed to derive the amount of pulse-block days (the number of days that in an area (block) a certain threshold (pulse) is exceeded) as required in the text of the Commission Decision, are:

- Pulse-generating activity
- Day
- Location
- Source level

Once a register is established, it will be possible to determine the coarse scale spatial and temporal distribution of impulsive noise sources. This quantified assessment of impulsive noise sources could be used in future to determine policy targets. It should also be possible to establish a baseline of “current condition”.

#### 3.2 Monitoring Guidance Ambient Noise

*Interpretation and aim:* TSG Noise agrees that ambient noise modelling should ideally be done in conjunction with measurements. The use of modelling will strengthen the analysis by overcoming bias introduced by changes in human activities or the by the natural variability of the environment, and will extend the monitoring to poorly or un-covered areas.

*Monitoring:* A first step towards monitoring is **to establish the current level and any trend in ambient noise**. This should be measured directly at observation stations, or inferred from a model used to interpolate between or extrapolate from measurements at observation stations.

*TSG Noise recommends for ambient noise:*

- ✓ The **combined use of measurements and models** (and possibly sound maps) is recommended as the best way for Member States to ascertain levels and trends of ambient noise in the relevant frequency bands. Member States should be careful to balance modelling with appropriate measurements.
- ✓ **Standards that measurement equipment should comply with.**
- ✓ **The use of mapping.**
- ✓ That Member States **adopt the arithmetic mean as averaging method.**

- ✓ That the **complete distribution be retained in bins of 1 dB** in order to establish the statistical significance of the trend.

In conclusion, factors to be considered while setting up the **noise monitoring strategy / plan** are:

- To **avoid interference with other noise sources** and **to reduce the risk of equipment loss**, areas where trawling occurs is to be avoided. Areas with a rocky seabed, or underwater structures such as wrecks and or with low intensity of trawler fishing are preferred
- Member States are encouraged to **jointly set-up monitoring programmes** (e.g. Regional Seas level) and cooperate in the design and set up of monitoring stations and exchange of expertise.
- Monitoring can be **most cost effective where existing monitoring stations are used**. Where there are only few measurement stations these should be at suitable locations for validating the model prediction used for interpolation and extrapolation. In addition, mooring should be designed for noise measurements.

The present recommendations are further developed and specified in **Parts II** (Technical Specifications) and **III** (background information, examples and annexes) that complete and complement the Monitoring Interim Guidance report.

# **European Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

## **MONITORING GUIDANCE FOR UNDERWATER NOISE IN EUROPEAN SEAS**

### **PART II - Monitoring Guidance Specifications**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Technical Subgroup on Underwater Noise and  
other forms of energy (TSG-Noise)**

**INTERIM GUIDANCE REPORT**

**May 2013**



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Interim Guidance Report:

TSG Noise was tasked to deliver guidance so that European Member States could initiate programmes for underwater noise monitoring. As monitoring must be operational by 2014, first guidance was required by spring 2013. The Interim Guidance report provides the basis for the noise monitoring programme however since new information continues to be compiled TSG Noise can review and update the guidance later in 2013. In addition, the results and feedback that may arise at the training workshop (preliminary planned now for Autumn 2013) can be incorporated. This also means the inclusion of new findings into the design of the register for impulsive noise generating activities, and from currently running initiatives around the Baltic Sea, The Netherlands, Germany and Ireland, for ambient noise. For this reason this report has been designated as an interim guidance until Autumn 2013.

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**Disclaimer:** This interim guidance report has been prepared by a group of experts nominated by EU Member States and Stakeholders. It provides technical advice and options for the operational implementation of monitoring MSFD Descriptor 11 on Underwater Noise. It does not constitute an official opinion of the European Commission, nor of the participating Institutions and EU Member States.

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## Summary

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requires European Member States (MS) to develop strategies for their marine waters that should lead to programmes of measures that achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in European Seas. As an essential step reaching good environmental status, MS should establish **monitoring programmes for assessment**, enabling the state of the marine waters concerned to be evaluated on a regular basis.

In 2010, in Commission Decision 2010/477/EU, criteria and methodological standards on GES of marine waters were published. Two indicators were described for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy): Indicator 11.1.1 on low and mid frequency impulsive sounds and Indicator 11.2.1 on continuous low frequency sound (ambient noise).

As a follow up to the Commission Decision, the Marine Directors in 2010 agreed to establish a Technical Subgroup (TSG) under the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) for further development of Descriptor 11 Noise/Energy. TSG (Underwater) Noise in 2011 focused on clarifying the purpose, use and limitation of the indicators and described methodology that would be unambiguous, effective and practicable. In February 2012, TSG Noise delivered its first report [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012]<sup>1</sup>. For both the impulsive and the ambient noise indicators significant progress was made to their practical implementation of the indicators, and most ambiguities had been solved.

In December 2011, EU Marine Directors requested the continuation of TSG Noise, and the group was tasked with recommending how MS might best make the indicators of the Commission Decision operational. TSG Noise was asked first to provide monitoring guidance that could be used by MS in establishing monitoring schemes for underwater noise in their marine waters. Further work includes providing suggestions for (future) target setting; for addressing the biological impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise and to evaluate new information on the effects of sound on marine biota with the view to considering indicators of noise effects.

The present document is **Part II** of the **Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas (Interim Guidance Report)** and provides MS with the information needed to commence the monitoring required to implement this aspect of MSFD. TSG Noise has focussed on ambiguities, uncertainties and other shortcomings that may hinder monitoring initiatives and has provided solutions, and describes methodology for monitoring both impulsive and ambient noise in such a way that information needed for management and policy can be collected in a cost-effective way. TSG Noise has no doubt that further issues will arise once monitoring starts, but hopes the principles laid out in this guidance will help resolve these.

The Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise is structured, as follows:

- Part I: Executive Summary & Recommendations,
- **Part II: Monitoring Guidance Specifications, and**
- Part III: Background Information and Annexes.

Part I of the Monitoring Guidance is the executive summary for policy and decision makers responsible for the adoption and implementation of MSFD at national level. It provides the key results and recommendations presented in Part II that support the practical guidance for MS and will, enable assessment of the current level of underwater noise.

Part II, is the main report of the Monitoring Guidance, that provides the specifications for the monitoring of underwater noise, with a dedicated section on impulsive noise (Criterion 11.1 of the Commission Decision) and ambient noise (Criterion 11.2 of the Commission Decision). It provides a detailed guide to those who will implement the monitoring/modelling, and noise registration technical specifications.

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<sup>1</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> TSG Noise Report (27 February 2012) available online:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/MSFD\\_reportTSG\\_Noise.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/MSFD_reportTSG_Noise.pdf)

Part III, the Background Information and annexes, is not part of the guidance, but is added for additional information, examples and list of references that support the Monitoring Guidance specifications.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to Underwater Noise

In the EC Decision 2010/477/EU on criteria and methodological standards on GES of marine waters, two indicators were published for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy) of the MSFD 2008/56/EC. These are: Indicator 11.1.1 on 'low and mid frequency impulsive sounds' and Indicator 11.2.1 on 'Continuous low frequency sound (ambient noise)'. As a follow up to the EC Decision, the Marine Directors in 2010 agreed to establish a TSG under the WG GES for further development of Descriptor 10 Marine Litter and Descriptor 11 Noise/Energy. For practical reasons Directorate-General Environment (DG ENV) decided that the work would be carried out by two separate groups. This report compiles the recommendations of TSG Noise. Text box 1 shows the extract of the EC Decision specifically for the indicators of Descriptor 11.

**Text Box 1: Extract of the indicators for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy) from EC Decision 2010/477/EU**

**Descriptor 11: Introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment.**

Together with underwater noise, which is highlighted throughout Directive 2008/56/EC, other forms of energy input have the potential to impact on components of marine ecosystems, such as thermal energy, electromagnetic fields and light. Additional scientific and technical progress is still required to support the further development of criteria related to this descriptor, including in relation to impacts of introduction of energy on marine life, relevant noise and frequency levels (which may need to be adapted, where appropriate, subject to the requirement of regional cooperation). At the current stage, the main orientations for the measurement of underwater noise have been identified as a first priority in relation to assessment and monitoring, subject to further development, including in relation to mapping. Anthropogenic sounds may be of short duration (e.g. impulsive such as from seismic surveys and piling for wind farms and platforms, as well as explosions) or be long lasting (e.g. continuous such as dredging, shipping and energy installations) affecting organisms in different ways. Most commercial activities entailing high-level noise levels affecting relatively broad areas are executed under regulated conditions subject to a license. This creates the opportunity for coordinating coherent requirements for measuring such loud impulsive sounds.

11.1. Distribution in time and place of loud, low and mid frequency impulsive sounds

- Proportion of days and their distribution within a calendar year over areas of a determined surface, as well as their spatial distribution, in which anthropogenic sound sources exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals measured as Sound Exposure Level (in dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa 2 .s) or as peak sound pressure level (in dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa peak) at one metre, measured over the frequency band 10 Hz to 10 kHz (11.1.1)

11.2. Continuous low frequency sound

- Trends in the ambient noise level within the 1/3 octave bands 63 and 125 Hz (centre frequency) (re 1 $\mu$ Pa RMS; average noise level in these octave bands over a year) measured by observation stations and/or with the use of models if appropriate (11.2.1).

## 1.2 Types of underwater noise

There are many kinds of anthropogenic energy that human activities introduce into the marine environment including sound, light and other electromagnetic fields, heat and radioactive energy. Among these, the most widespread and pervasive kind of energy is underwater sound. It is likely that sound levels, and associated effects on the marine ecosystem have been increasing since the advent of steam-driven ships, although there have been very few studies that have quantified such a change. The numbers of anthropogenic electromagnetic fields are increasing due to the increasing number of

power cables crossing our seas but these emissions are relatively localised to the cables. Light and heat emissions are also relatively localised, but may have significant local effects [Tasker *et al.*, 2010].

Energy input can occur on many scales in both space and time. Anthropogenic sounds may be of short duration (e.g. impulsive) or be long lasting (e.g. continuous); impulsive sounds may however be repeated at intervals (duty cycle) and such repetition may become diffuse with distance and reverberation and become indistinguishable from continuous noise. Higher frequency sounds transmit less well in the marine environment whereas lower frequency sounds can travel far. In summary, there is great variability in the nature of, and transmission of, sound in the marine environment.

Marine organisms that are exposed to noise can be adversely affected both on a short timescale (acute effect) and on a long timescale (permanent or chronic effects). Adverse effects can be subtle (e.g. temporary reduction in hearing sensitivity, behavioural effects) or obvious (e.g. worst case, death). These adverse effects can be widespread (as opposed to local for other forms of energy) and, following the recommendations of Tasker *et al.*, (2010), the EC decided in September 2010 that the two indicators for underwater noise listed in Text Box 1 should be used in describing GES (EC Decision 2010/477/EU on criteria and methodological standards on GES). This interim guidance report therefore focuses largely on providing guidance for monitoring these indicators of underwater sound rather than on other sources of energy.

The International Standard [ISO 2003] distinguishes between “**continuous sound**” and “**impulsive sound**”. Specifically, according to [ISO 2003]:

*“The sound pressure level of the sound from a continuous sound source can be constant, fluctuating or slowly varying over a time interval. Continuous sound is preferably described by the [weighted] equivalent continuous sound pressure level over a specified time interval. For fluctuating and intermittent sounds, the [weighted] maximum sound pressure level with a specified time weighting may also be used.*

Further, [ISO 2003] defines “impulsive sound” as “sound characterised by brief bursts of sound pressure”, with the clarifying note: The duration of a single impulsive sound is usually less than 1 s.

TSG Noise defined “impulsive sound” as *a sound for which the effective time duration of individual sound pulses is less than ten seconds and whose repetition time exceeds four times this effective time duration. In this interpretation, it is proposed that all sounds of duration less than 10 s that are not repeated are also impulsive* [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012].

## 2. Guidance for registration of impulsive noise

From the Commission Decision 2010/477/EU (CD), Indicator 11.1.1: *Proportion of days and their distribution within a calendar year over areas of a determined surface, as well as their spatial distribution, in which anthropogenic sound sources exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animals measured as Sound Exposure Level (in dB re 1 $\mu$ Pa 2 .s) or as peak sound pressure level (in dB re 1 $\mu$ Pa peak) at one metre, measured over the frequency band 10 Hz to 10 kHz.*

This description of this indicator is not unambiguous and therefore TSG Noise suggests the following less ambiguous description of the indicator. TSG Noise refines its interpretation of indicator 11.1.1 on low and mid-frequency impulsive sounds as follows:

*The proportion of days and their distribution within a calendar year, over geographical locations whose shape and area are to be determined, and their spatial distribution in which source level or suitable proxy of anthropogenic sound sources, measured over the frequency band 10 Hz to 10 kHz, exceeds a value that is likely to entail significant impact on marine animals (11.1.1).*

For further considerations and explanation, see the 1<sup>st</sup> TSG report [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012].

### 2.1 Main objective and Scope of the indicator

TSG Noise noted earlier that guidance was needed on the main objective of the indicator for impulsive noise. In the First report of TSG Noise of February 2012, the aim of the indicator was therefore further explained. A basic principle of the MSFD is that it addresses the ecosystem rather than individual animals or species (consideration 5: the development and implementation of the thematic strategy should be aimed at the conservation of the marine ecosystems). This indicator is addressing the cumulative impact of activities, rather than that of individual projects or programme (those are addressed by other EU legislation). Effects of local/singular activities are therefore not covered by this indicator, and this indicator on its own is not intended, nor is it sufficient, to manage singular events. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) can be used to assess and where necessary, to limit the environmental impacts of individual projects.

The impact that is addressed by Indicator 11.1.1 is “considerable” displacement. This means displacement of a significant proportion of individuals for a relevant time period and spatial scale. The indicator addresses the cumulative impact of sound generating activities and possible associated displacement, rather than that of individual projects see [Van der Graaf, 2012], par 3.3.1.3).

The initial purpose of this indicator is to assess the pressure on the environment, by making available an overview of all loud impulsive low and mid-frequency sound sources, through the year and throughout regional seas. This will enable MS to get an overview of the overall pressure on the environment from these sources, which has not been achieved previously (see First report of TSG Noise, Feb 2012).

The initial step is to establish the current level and trend in these impulsive sounds. This should be done by setting up a register of the occurrence of these impulsive sounds.

### 2.2 Outline of the register (M1-b)

A noise register may be viewed as the data that would underlie a relatively coarse scale map. The amplitude, frequency and other impulsive characteristics of the sounds being mapped are not precisely defined – the frequency range has been defined in the Commission Decision as 10 Hz to 10 kHz. It should be noted that the precise properties of an impulsive sound that cause displacement are not known, and is certain to vary with biological receptor and period of the year. Thus rather than attempt to define these properties, a practical approach is to map those human activities likely to generate “loud” impulsive sounds within the frequency range in the Commission decision.

Seismic survey, pile-driving, explosives, sonars working at relevant frequencies and some acoustic deterrent devices are the most important sound-sources that should be considered for inclusion in the register. Possibly there are additional sources that could be of concern (boomers, sparkers, scientific echo sounders). Since a registry that leaves out part of the sound sources is not useful if the aim is to address cumulative effects of all sources of impulsive noise, and therefore it is recommended that information on all sources should be included in the registry [see Van der Graaf et al., 2012]. TSG Noise therefore suggest that data on explosions and from activities of which the sole purpose is defence or national security should be included in the register, on a voluntary basis, but notes that this is a national policy issue.

The main items in the register needed to derive pulse-block days (the number of days that in an area (block) a certain threshold (pulse) is exceeded) as required in the text of the Commission Decision, are:

- Pulse-generating activity
- Day
- Location
- Source level

Thresholds have been proposed for inclusion of sources in the register (2.3.2) and recommendations for registration of further information to characterise the source (2.4); see also section 2.1 of Part III report for the methodology.

## 2.2.1 Options for addressing temporal and spatial scale

The temporal scale of the map is one day, while the proposed spatial scale is of blocks of sea similar in size to present offshore licensing blocks (approximately 10 nmi x 5 nmi). There are two spatial units that should be used in the analysis. The first is the blocks or grid size used for registering the data. The second is the assessment areas used for the analysis.

In the first report of the TSG Noise, options for addressing spatial scale were set out. It was recommended that one grid size should be used by all MS. For practical reasons TSG Noise proposes to use standard hydrocarbon licensing blocks for collection of data for seismic surveys, since most MS commonly use these licensing blocks. Use of these blocks may be practicable when collecting data for other relevant sources, but sometimes other approaches may be needed (see Part III of the Monitoring Guidance, chapter 2.2).

## 2.3 Technical Specifications

### 2.3.1 Thresholds (M1-a)

Minimum noise thresholds have been defined for low and mid-frequency sources as a basis for including sources in the register. For background and explanation of these values see Part III of the Monitoring Guidance (chapter 2.1)

For impact pile-drivers no minimum threshold should be used and all pile-driving activities should be registered.

For sonars, airguns, acoustic deterrents and explosions, minimum thresholds should be used for uptake in the registers. The generic source level (SL) threshold for inclusion in the register for non-impulsive sources is 176 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$  m, whereas the threshold for inclusion of impulsive sources is an energy source level ( $SL_E$ ) of 186 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$ . For airguns and explosives it is more convenient to convert these to proxies of zero to peak source level ( $SL_{z-p}$ ) and equivalent TNT charge mass ( $m_{\text{TNTeq}}$ ), respectively. The recommended thresholds for these source levels and proxies are listed below<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> This list of thresholds need to be updated regularly as techniques evolve. An example is marine vibroseis that may soon be used to replace airguns in shallow water and transition zone surveys.



- Airgun:  $SL_{z-p} > 209 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$
- Low-mid frequency sonar:  $SL > 176 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$
- Low-mid freq. acoustic deterrent:  $SL > 176 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$
- Generic non-impulsive sound source:  $SL > 176 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}^3$
- Explosions:  $m_{TNTeq} > 8 \text{ g}$
- Generic impulsive sound source:  $SL_E > 186 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$

### 2.3.2 Source characterisation (M1-a)

The thresholds that were derived will ensure that all sources that have a potential for significant population level effect will be included in the register. However, the use of these relatively low thresholds will result in sources being registered that actually will have a relatively low potential for significant impact. TSG Noise concluded that there is a need for more detail in the register than only the day and location, but also other information, of which the source level is the most important. The likely role of the register is recording activities in order to assess/evaluate the total pressure from impulsive sources. For this role additional information should be recorded if it is available. In a later phase the register may serve as a tool to aid management decision-taking.

If member states wish to improve the quality and usability of the register, TSG Noise recommends that the following additional information should be gathered in the register. This will improve the assessment of the impact of sounds:

#### Source properties

- Source level or proxy (already registered);
- Source spectra;
- Duty cycle;
- Duration of transmissions;
- Directivity<sup>4</sup>;
- Source depth;
- Platform speed

Of these parameters, the source level (or proxy) is the most important one. Since it is possible that many operators (e.g. navies using sonar, oil and gas companies using airguns) will not cooperate if detailed information of source properties is requested, (e.g. military sonar source level is often considered classified), it is proposed that in such a case the operators will have the option to report source level in 10 dB bins rather than giving a precise figure.

## 2.4 Interpretation of results (M1-c&d)

This indicator is designed to provide the information to assess the temporal and spatial distribution of impulsive noise sources and the possible impacts of displacement at the population level. The data that will be gathered in the register will enable MS to estimate per day at a course scale the size of area that is affected, e.g. from which animals may be displaced. Many further steps would be needed

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<sup>3</sup> For sources with a tonal character (sonars, deterrents and the generic non-impulsive source) the SL in the frequency band below 10 kHz is relevant.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the energy from airguns is directed downwards, and therefore directivity data are needed to assess their significance. Directivity plots are routinely produced by seismic survey companies in advance of carrying out their surveys. If this information is made available (if possible in digital form), MS can include this information when assessing possible effect ranges and thereby improve the assessment. If for other sources the producer of the sound wants the directionality to be taken into account, that producer should provide the necessary information.

to assess whether or not such displacement might affect species at the population level. This will require considerable further research for even the most studied species at present and the consequences will vary with species. Some modelling approaches, such as the Population Consequences of Acoustic Disturbance (PCAD) model project [National Research Council, 2005] may aid understanding. Plainly the ecological consequences of displacement will not only depend on its temporary and spatial nature but also on whether or not alternative suitable habitat is available.

### **Baseline**

According to EC guidance<sup>5</sup> baseline can either be defined as:

- a) *reference state or background levels: a state of the environment considered largely free from the adverse effects of anthropogenic activities (i.e. negligible impacts from pressures on the environment). This can be defined in relation to aspects of environment state (physical, chemical and/or biological characteristics), or to levels of pressure on the environment or impact (e.g. an absence of contaminants or certain impacts). This type of baseline is typically used to allow an acceptable deviation in state to be defined which acts as the target threshold value to be achieved. Or;*
- b) *A specified/known state (of the environment, or the pressures on the environment and impacts acting upon it) usually implying, due to the methods used to derive it, that it may not be a reference state. This type of baseline is typically used to define the state at a specified time, often with an aim that there should be no further deterioration in environmental quality or levels of pressures on the environment and their impacts and/or that there should be improvements in quality from that date. Targets are consequently set towards improvement in quality or to ensure no further deterioration.*

For impulsive noise the reference state (type a) baseline) is a state where there is negligible population level displacement impacts from anthropogenic noise. This is a zero-line, e.g. no significant displacement (where 'no significant displacement' means 'no significant displacement caused by man-made sound').

Once a register is set up, it should be possible to determine the spatial and temporal distribution of impulsive noise sources. This quantified assessment of impulsive noise sources can then be used to determine policy targets and to establish type b) baseline.

For the analysis of the data, the use of these blocks may be practical, but MS should realise that the actual size of the area affected by a source may vary (most notably depending on source level and sound propagation characteristics). In addition, various marine organisms may be affected by different received sound characteristics. Making use of standard blocks to describe the affected area may not be sufficient to evaluate whether GES is achieved. This can be better evaluated in the future using actual monitoring data.

### **Thresholds and targets**

There is presently insufficient knowledge to determine the amount of disturbance that would compromise Good Environmental Status. There are several options for target setting, each of which needs further consideration that might best occur once example registers are in place. These might include:

- A target on the maximum allowable number of pulse-block days in an assessment area
- A no-deterioration (i.e. stable or negative trends) target on the number of pulse-block days in an assessment area
- A percentage target on the assessment area that is affected due to noise disturbance -i.e. at any given day less than x% of the assessment area is lost due to noise disturbance)

TSG Noise stresses that setting a realistic target is only possible once a baseline (i.e. a quantified assessment) is known and when more information is available on the impacts of noise. TSG Noise will

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission. 2012. Guidance for 2012 reporting under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, using the MSFD database tool. Version 1.0. DG Environment, Brussels. pp164.

work in 2013 and 2014 towards advice on thresholds and targets. This advice will be on the type of target MS could consider. Setting the threshold level is, of course, a responsibility of the MS themselves.

**Practical uses of the noise register**

The register can initially be used for estimating the spatial and temporal impact on the environment (the total period and total habitat loss by impulsive noise sources) and for determining the baseline level. Once a baseline is known and targets have been set the register can be used for management purposes (e.g. by regulators in the process of planning and licensing activities) and assist in marine spatial planning incorporating displacement mitigation guidelines and reducing the potential for cumulative impacts.

### 3. Monitoring guidance for ambient noise

This chapter provides a guide for the monitoring of ambient noise as covered by the EU MSFD indicator 11.2.1. This indicator is described in the Commission Decision:

- *Trends in the ambient noise level within the 1/3 octave bands 63 and 125 Hz (centre frequency) (re 1µPa RMS; average noise level in these octave bands over a year) measured by observation stations and/or with the use of models if appropriate (11.2.1).*

The chapter starts with a brief introduction and recapitulation of the scope of the indicator. What follows are the definitions – as recommended by TSG Noise – for the most essential terms of Indicator 11.2.1. Next, the report will outline some key concepts of a monitoring programme for this indicator. It is beyond the remit of TSG Noise to provide a detailed guide for all European (sub) regions, but the cornerstones of the organisation of the monitoring / modelling, the technical specifications of equipment and averaging method will be provided. The chapter ends with initial suggestions for the interpretation of the results.

#### 3.1 Main objective and Scope of the indicator

Tasker *et al.*, (2010) and Van der Graaf *et al.*, (2012) provide the background for the understanding of the concept behind Indicator 11.2.1. This indicator focuses on the issue of chronic exposure of marine life to low frequency ambient noise with the main contributor, at least in many regions, being sounds from commercial shipping, hence the initial choice of the two frequency bands most relevant to shipping noise. Literature suggests that exposure to these types of sounds could lead to masking of biological important signals and in the long term could also induce stress in receivers, which in turn may lead to physiological impacts (see review by OSPAR, 2009).

TSG Noise provides advice on scope and optimal approach, and further provides some clarifications and more detailed definitions of some essential terms to make Indicator 11.2.1 operational.

In addition to the advice needed to operationalize the indicator, TSG Noise discussed to what extent monitoring trends is sufficient to reach the overarching aim of the MSFD to ensure that Good Environmental Status is reached. Within TSG Noise it was suggested that *trends only* are not sufficient to describe GES: trends indicate whether the actual pressure on the environment (e.g., shipping noise) is rising or falling. To describe actual GES actual levels, based on a wider overview of the area, a combination of modelling/ mapping will be needed.

This reasoning was compared with the approach chosen by the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) and described in the 'Common Understanding' document [EC WG GES, 2011<sup>6</sup>]. WG GES advocates the use of a trend as an interim target "[to ascertain] whether progress is being made towards achieving GES ... until the evidence base supports the establishment of more quantitative environmental targets". For example the proposed target for anthropogenic nutrients: "A decreasing trend in dissolved organic nitrogen and phosphorous concentration, resulting from anthropogenic nutrient input over a 10 year period".

A similar trend-based target can be used for underwater noise. If it were known that existing levels were too high, but not yet what levels are safe, it would make sense to adopt a downward trend as interim target. Although there is some evidence that cetaceans adjust their vocalisations according to noise conditions in much the same way as birds are known to do, and there is also some evidence [Rolland *et al.*, 2012] that noise increases stress, in the opinion of TSG Noise there is still insufficient knowledge on the effects of (increased) ambient noise levels in the ocean to determine whether existing levels are too high or where GES is being achieved with respect to ambient noise. However, if

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<sup>6</sup> EC Working Group on Good Environmental Status, Common Understanding of (Initial) Assessment, Determination of Good Environmental Status (GES) and Establishment of Environmental Targets (Art. 8, 9 & 10 MSFD), Version 6 – 22 November 2011, endorsed as living document at the meeting of the EU Marine Directors on 8-9 December 2011

a Member State suspects that noise levels are too high (or might soon be too high if they continue to rise), then that Member State might still choose to adopt a downward (or non-increasing) trend as target, in line with the use of the precautionary principle as described in the MSFD.

An indicator can be used by MS for target setting and in programmes of measures, if there is a reasonable expectation that determining the value of the indicator is achievable, and where needed adopt programmes of measures, on a timescale relevant to the adaptive management process as required by article 3 of the MSFD. At present, there is no knowledge of longer-term trends of ambient noise in European waters, but there is some information available that may make clear what MS can expect if they attempt to determine trends in European waters.

Long term (decadal) measurements in the north-east Pacific Ocean show an increase in the 63 Hz band of 5 dB in 35 years between 1965 and 2000, which amounts to 1.4 dB per decade on average [Andrew *et al.*, 2011]; the 3.5-year time series presented in Van der Schaar *et al.*, (2013) showed large fluctuations in measurements, with four hydrophone stations placed in three different oceans (also see chapters 2.8 for a description of this data set in Part III).

Although similar trends can be expected to have occurred in deep water in other parts of the industrialised world, this cannot be confirmed by measurements in European waters since no suitable historical measurements are available and even with a validated hind cast model it will be difficult to verify the accuracy of the data. In shallow water, trends of ambient noise are likely to be different, due to different categories of vessels using these waters and differing sound propagation conditions. Whether the changes in trends in shallow water are likely to be greater or less than in deep water is not known. This is further complicated by spatial variation of trends, which is likely to be greater than in deep water, partly because the distance to the sources is typically smaller (increasing the likelihood of high amplitude transient sounds), and partly because of the variable propagation conditions typically encountered in shallow water. Spatial variation will probably be much larger than the yearly trends, because some waters (e.g. harbour channels) are used to a far greater extent than other areas.

Thus, it will probably take decades rather than years (much later than 2020) to establish a statistically significant trend of ambient noise for EU waters. From a practical point of view it therefore makes sense to measure levels, not trends. Levels can be measured on a timescale relevant to MSFD, and can be compared with a target.

Consequently, to describe both GES and to determine trends in these sounds, actual levels are needed, and understanding of the spatial and temporal variations in levels is needed to identify an underlying trend.

In conclusion, it was decided that it is within the remit of TSG Noise not only to describe how MS can monitor trends, but alongside to advise MS about the best approach to measure actual levels (including a wider overview of the area, created by combination of modelling/ mapping), and this will provide the option for MS to choose the most appropriate approach when setting up monitoring; this guidance therefore also addresses how MS in a cost-effective way can monitor actual levels (and thereby monitor trends).

### 3.2 Definitions for ambient noise

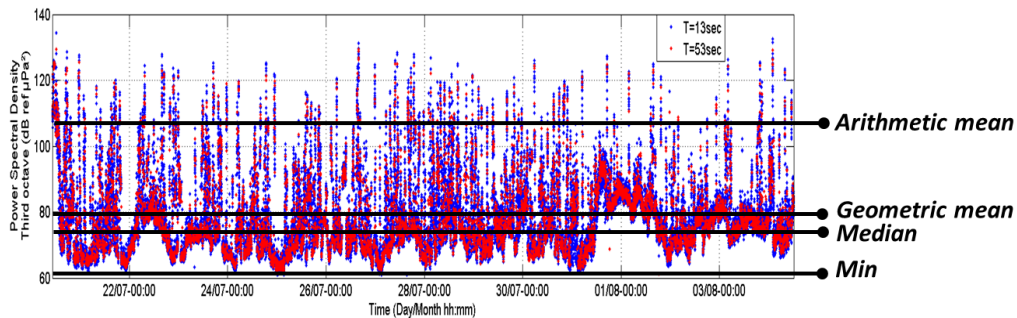
TSG Noise has suggested a more precise definition of the original Indicator 11.2.1:

*Trends in the annual average of the squared sound pressure associated with ambient noise in each of two third octave bands, one centred at 63 Hz and the other at 125 Hz, expressed as a level in decibels, in units of dB re 1 µPa, either measured directly at observation stations, or inferred from a model used to interpolate between or extrapolate from measurements at observation stations [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012].*

For the monitoring concept, it is important to note explanations for some of the terms included in the above definition [see Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012]:

**Trend** should be defined as the general direction in which something is developing or changing. In the context of monitoring, 'trend' refers to year-to-year (or longer) changes in a specific quantity.

**Annual averaged squared sound pressure level.** TSG Noise recommends that the averaging method for annually averaged noise level is the arithmetic mean of the squared sound pressure samples. In order to establish the statistical significance of any trend, the distribution in the form of percentiles of the cumulative probability density function is also required, corresponding to percentage exceedance levels. The 50 % exceedance level is also the median. For the establishment of the statistical significance of the trend, the distribution in the form of exceedance levels is required (see also chapter 3.3.) The difference between the arithmetic mean and median is a measure of variability and skewness of received levels. See fig. 1 (below) for clarification.



**Figure 1: Example of approx. 14 days of continuous measurement in the 125 Hz third octave band made off Cork harbour (Ireland) entrance made during the STRIVE project (source: Quiet-Oceans).** The measured signal has a typical structure of background noise and emerging ship noise when ships are passing close to the hydrophone. Three types of averaging are displayed: the arithmetic mean, which reflects the presence of high amplitude transients, the geometric mean, and the median.

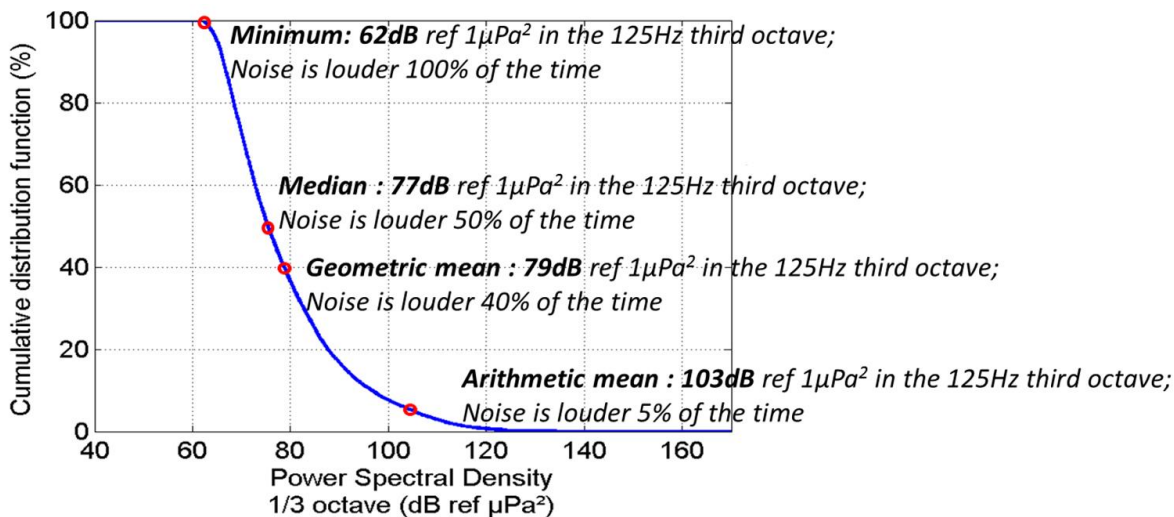


Figure 2: Statistical representation of the measured sound pressure level in the 125 Hz third octave band off Cork harbour as a cumulative distribution function, the exceedance<sup>7</sup>. The curve shows the proportion of time where a given minimum level is reached. For example, it shows that 50% of the time, the measured level exceeds 77 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$ , and that only 5% of the time the level than exceeds the arithmetic mean.

**N percent exceedance level:** Level that is exceeded N times out of 100

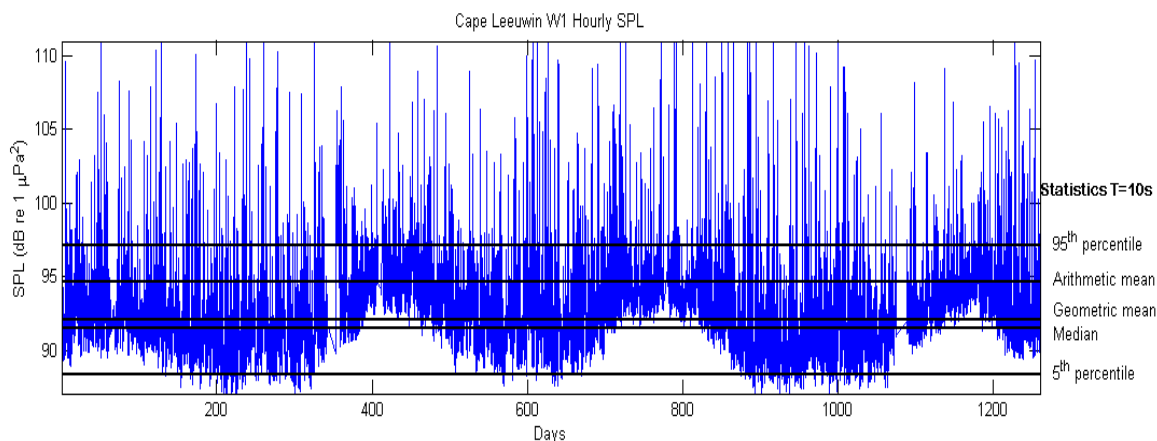
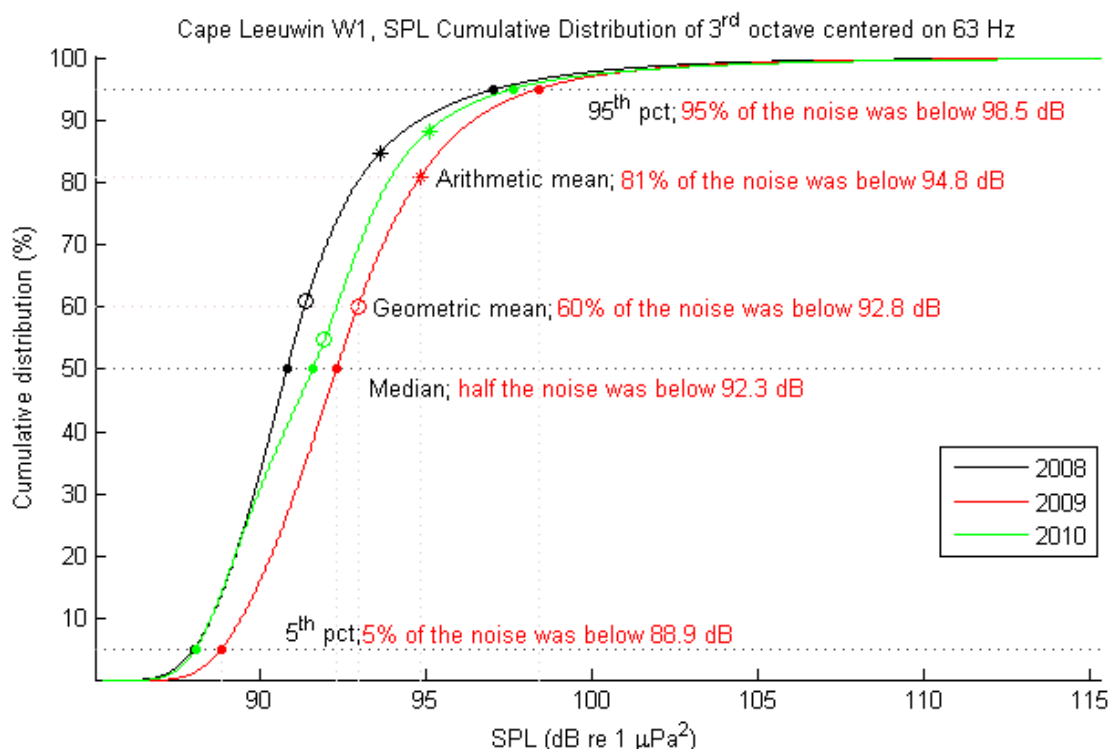


Figure 3: Example of 3 years of measurements in the 63 Hz third octave band made at the CTBTO Cape Leeuwin station. The graphic shows hourly summarised SPL measurements in blue to avoid a very dense graphic and leading to a somewhat smoothed curve. The five statistics indicated on the right were computed over 10 second SPL measurements.

<sup>7</sup> The term ‘exceedance level’ is preferred to ‘percentile’ because ‘10th percentile’ can mean either the value exceeded 10% of the time (10% exceedance level) or the value not exceeded 10% of the time (90% exceedance level). See [ISO 2003] ISO 1996-1:2003, INTERNATIONAL STANDARD ISO 1996-1, Second edition, 2003-08-01, Acoustics — Description, measurement and assessment of environmental noise —, Part 1: Basic quantities and assessment procedures



**Figure 4: Cumulative distribution of the noise levels (SPL over a 10 second window) measured at the CTBTO Cape Leeuwin station during three consecutive years.** The curve shows the proportion of measurements that were below a certain sound level. The five statistics on the right are interpreted for the year 2009 (red).

**Ambient noise** All sound except that resulting from the deployment, operation or recovery of the recording equipment and its associated platform where ‘all sound’ includes both natural and anthropogenic sounds.

**Third octave bands** A frequency band whose width is one tenth of a decade and whose centre frequency is one of the preferred frequencies listed in IEC 61260:1995 Electro-acoustics – Octave band and fractional-octave-band filters. TSG Noise also recommends including third octave bands covering the frequency range up to 20 kHz be considered by Member States for recording and possibly in the analysis. The additional range specified will add relatively little to the operational cost but will provide potentially valuable extra data that will contribute to the knowledge base and may assist with evaluation of the monitoring regime at the six-year revision.

### 3.3 Measurements and modelling

TSG Noise notes that the CD does not require that MS describe the complete noise field in their waters, and in theory a limited number of monitoring stations (measurement locations) could suffice to fulfil the requirements of the indicator. TSG Noise has also evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of different monitoring approaches.

TSG Noise considers measurements to be essential to provide ground truth at specific locations, but results are sensitive to bias introduced by known changes in the spatial distribution of human activities, e.g. changes in a ferry route and bias introduced by the natural variability of the environment (climatic, seasonal change, change in vertical stratification of the ocean and other factors). At sea measurements are also logistically challenging. TSG Noise therefore has evaluated whether modelling can be used to design a more comprehensive and cost-effective monitoring strategy.



### 3.3.1 The use of modelling

1. First and foremost, the use of modelling within indicators and noise statistics, and possibly eventually to create noise maps, ensures that trend estimation is more reliable and cost-effective, for a number of reasons:
  - i. Use of models reduces the time required to establish a trend with a fixed number of measurement stations (the expected trend in shipping noise, based on observations in deep water, is of order 0.1 dB/year; it will take many years, possibly decades, to reveal such a small trend without the help of spatial averaging)
  - ii. Use of models reduces the number of stations required to establish a trend in a fixed amount of time (similar reasoning) and thus reduce the cost of monitoring
  - iii. Modelling will also help with the choice of monitoring positions and monitoring equipment (to select locations where the noise is expected to be dominated by shipping as opposed to explosions or seismic surveys).
2. Further, use of models would enable the identification of trends for different types of source separately, directly identifying the cause of any increase (or decrease) and thus facilitating mitigation action. Furthermore, models would permit the removal of selected sources if considered not to cause a departure from GES (such as natural sources of sound, both biotic and abiotic (e.g. lightning)).
3. Use of models would provide a member state with an overview of actual levels and distribution of levels across its sea area, and thereby enable identification of departures from GES.

In addition, there are a number of advantages of using modelling approaches that could contribute to a greater understanding of the likely impacts of noise in the future.

4. Use of models enables one to possibly predict the effect of future changes (forecast- e.g. what is the expected effect of a certain percentage increase in shipping traffic (assuming no noise mitigation) in the eastern Baltic over the next years?) and to re-construct a history of the past (hind cast). There would be limitations to such work as new ships may have other noise signatures than their earlier equivalents and the relationship between amount of traffic and sound is not straightforward.
5. Use of models enables one to make an ex ante estimate of the efficacy of alternative mitigation actions,

TSG Noise concludes that the combined use of measurements and models (and possibly sound maps) is the best way for Member States to ascertain levels and trends of ambient noise in the relevant frequency bands. Member States should be careful to balance modelling with appropriate measurements.

The first TSG Noise report [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012] describes standards that measurement equipment should comply with, along with comments about possible shortcomings of commercially available equipment. Models also require standards and definitions which are needed to clarify what is an appropriate model and what is not. This chapter provides advice on the standards to which models should comply with and will describe modelling approaches that can be used by Member States.

### 3.3.2 Available knowledge on noise mapping and possible applications

Next to modelling, the use of noise mapping has been suggested and the terms of reference require TSG Noise to address the use of mapping.

Acoustic modelling of the noise can be done in such a way that the output is delivered in the form of noise maps. Noise maps can be seen as a form of model output that is relatively easy to understand. It creates opportunities for other uses, for instance for management and evaluation of measurements. Therefore, several initiatives using mapping have started in a number of Member States. These are described in more detail in part III. These include:

- Noise maps for shipping and explosions in the Dutch North Sea- this provides an overview of the potential of such maps, and how they can be used to identify locations for where the soundscape is dominated by specific sources, but also how noise maps may help choosing suitable locations for measurement stations.
- Noise modelling and mapping in Irish waters describes how sound maps associated with shipping can be produced using data from an Automated Identification System (AIS). Using this data, the noise prediction system can calculate the noise field associated with specific anthropogenic activities, including noise statistics depending on seasonal variations of environmental factors and shipping variability
- The Baltic Sea Information on the Acoustic Soundscape (BIAS) project that aims to establish regional implementation noise monitoring, including development of tools for management description of sound levels. The project further aims to establish regional standards and methodologies for handling of data and results, to enable efficient joint management. Further aim is to model the soundscape and thereby expand the measurements to the entire Baltic Sea.
- Noise modelling and mapping in German waters describes the initiative to develop mapping software but also the possible link to habitat modelling and impact assessment.

The use of mapping, which is now being explored for underwater noise monitoring and management has some history and in the process of implementing the MSFD Member States should make use of earlier European experience with air acoustics. Noise monitoring in air has been carried out for decades and has resulted in a body of work on noise maps. In part III chapter 2.8 more information is available on noise mapping in air, including relevant EU regulation (the Noise Directive) and other useful background information that can assist in implementing the MSFD.

### **3.4 Outline of the monitoring programme**

TSG Noise advises MS within a sub region to work together to set up ambient noise monitoring systems. Without knowing how MS will work together, TSG Noise cannot define exact locations for monitoring. Based on Tasker *et al.*, (2010), and Van der Graaf *et al.*, (2012), and discussions within TSG Noise, we suggest an initial set of rules for the placement of devices.

This indicator is designed to monitor ambient noise, and since the main contribution is made by shipping, the frequency bands were chosen where shipping contributes the most to anthropogenic sound. For MS designing monitoring programme(s) it makes sense to design the monitoring programme based on the presence of one of the biggest contributors, shipping and its sounds. In addition to being a major contributor, patterns of shipping tend to remain consistent over many years compared to other noise sources such as seismic surveys that may contribute more noise energy but distribution patterns of noise production change between years.

A set of measurements from a point at an appropriate distance from a shipping lane can be combined with data on individual vessels (from a vessel monitoring system such as AIS) to provide data on source levels of vessels. Estimates of the source levels for the assemblages of vessels within an area could then be used as input to models

The monitoring programme should aim to pursue two linked objectives:

1. to provide input to the models,
2. to ground truth models. with a representative value for a region

If this approach is taken to ambient noise monitoring then only a limited set of measuring stations per region / basin would be needed to satisfy the requirements of the indicator. However, it would also be necessary to have good information on spatial distribution of activities in each region, and region-wide sound propagation characteristics.

Since low-frequency sound propagates over long distances the sounds in the relevant frequency bands will likely be dominated by shipping lanes throughout many of Europe's seas. Therefore,

remotely placed hydrophones would be able to capture the diversity of noise contributions in a more balanced way sound. Such a monitoring strategy is likely to be suitable for meaningful monitoring at a regional scale.

The positioning of the measurement stations regarding distance to shipping lanes, ferry routes, busy areas (e.g. lease blocks, ports) is therefore critical. Overall received levels from different sources will vary greatly depending on the location of measurement stations. The value found for an average will depend strongly on location, but it may be feasible to detect trends at carefully chosen locations that are representative of a wider area. As noted above, spatial averaging is essential in order to interpret the measured values.

One option might be to contrast measurements made close to e.g. shipping lanes, wind farms or other noise sources, with measurements made at long range.

***Text box 3: Deep water and shallow water***

In deep water regions, a single measurement point (at low frequencies) may be representative of a wide region because low frequency sound propagates well in deep water. This is not the case in shallow water. However, in deep water, there is still a need to understand environmental factors affecting propagation characteristics. For instance, “sound channels” and discontinuities from simple spreading loss models can occur. These propagation effects may lead, for example, to the sound measured in the Atlantic Ocean in winter at 15 km from a sound source being almost zero in the upper layers of the ocean, whereas at 50 km from that source, the received level may be dominated by the sound from the source. In shallow waters, the vertical distribution of the sound is likely more homogeneous, but geographical changes can occur due to rapid change in bathymetry, coast line geometry, islands, etc. This means that extreme care is required when interpreting measurements from a single hydrophone and spatial averaging is required before attempting to infer trends.

Following these points, TSG Noise recommends an initial set of rules for the placement of measurement devices (in order of importance):

- 1- If there are only few measurement stations per basin, these should be at suitable locations for validating the model prediction used for interpolation and extrapolation. Monitoring may be more cost effective if existing stations are used for monitoring other oceanographic features.
- 2- In deep water, place the devices in areas of low shipping density. The range at which to shipping lanes result in elevated noise levels may be greater in deep water as low frequency sound can propagate long distances.
- 3- Place one hydrophone close to the bottom (a priori subject to the lower variability of noise levels). If budgets allow for a second hydrophone, it should be placed at the depth where the lowest value for the yearly averaged sound speed is expected (if that information is available), and in deep water that depth should be preferred over the seabed or the sea surface.
- 4- Consider special topography and bathymetry effects- e.g. when there are pronounced coastal landscapes or islands/archipelagos it may be considered to place hydrophones on opposite sides,
- 5- In waters subjected to trawling, use locations that are protected from fishing activities or locations where trawling is avoided due to bottom features (e.g. underwater structures/wrecks);
- 6- Consider, and if possible avoid being close to, the possible presence of other sound producing activities that might interfere with measurements e.g. offshore activities like oil- and gas exploration or construction activities. Areas of particularly high tidal currents may also have elevated noise levels.
- 7- Any mooring has to have been designed for noise measurements to avoid self-noise from mooring tackle.

### 3.4.1 Example of planning sensor locations with ship traffic density

There are several factors that will come into play when choosing the positions in a pre-specified region, such as shipping density, convergence/divergence of shipping lanes, water depths, fishing activities, seismic surveys and areas of special interest. A starting point in the decision process is to make use of available information related to sound activities. The first step is to map actual shipping data, identifying annual ships passages at specified sections and the average annual shipping density over the whole region of interest. These maps can then be used to identify potential locations for monitoring stations and quantify the density of shipping within a specified radius. The characteristics of each potential location can then be examined for other noise generating influences (such as off-shore construction, planned seismic surveys or intense seasonal fisheries). To be consistent with the general principle of monitoring in locations which minimise variability, locations close to loud, but short-term, noise sources would be avoided. At finer spatial scales the detailed characteristics of possible locations can be examined for rates of tidal current, bottom type, and the risks to the monitoring station from fishing activities. In addition, there may be special areas designated for vulnerable marine life where monitoring is considered particularly important.

#### Step one: establishing the shipping density

The annual density maps of shipping (including AIS and Vessel monitoring system, VMS data) are essential for the decision on preliminary positions. First the shipping lanes, which will constitute candidates for the final sensor positions, are identified. An example is shown in figure 5 where the number of ship passages (not including fishing vessels) over transects are presented for the Baltic Sea. It should be stressed that the density can change due to lanes diverging or converging.

Shipping density can be expressed in a number of ways, transits across an area, total distance travelled within an area or the numbers of vessels within an area. The annual average density surface of ships per unit area is probably most relevant in terms of noise. If such density surfaces are generated for the region of interest then the average density for various distances from any location can be estimated. Data from AIS and particularly satellite AIS (s-AIS) can be used for analysis of shipping density, with appropriate adjustments in high density areas [Eiden and Martensen, 2010]. Figure 6 shows an example of data by 10 blocks. Data at this spatial resolution are readily available, however for most monitoring placements it may be necessary to obtain data at a rather finer spatial scale which can also be obtained from s-AIS.

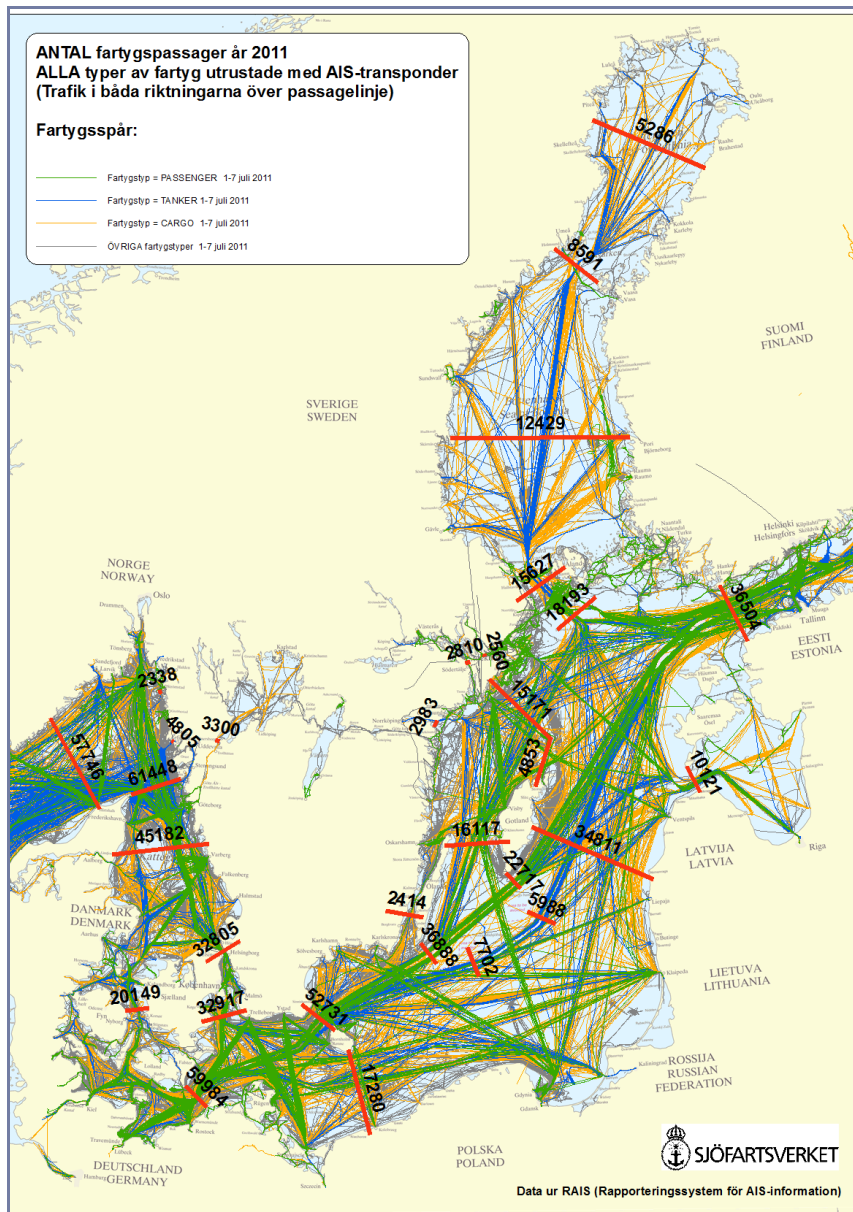
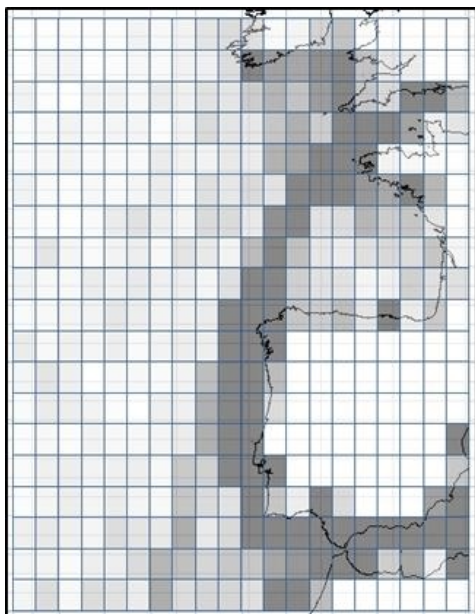


Figure 5. Ship traffic 2011 at the major transects in the Baltic Sea. Black numbers indicate the overall ship passages in both directions over the red line during 2011. Green: passenger ships; blue: tankers; orange: cargo ships; grey, other ships (source Swedish Maritime Administration).



**Figure 6. Example plot of density of shipping (vessels km<sup>-2</sup>) by 1o blocks from S-AIS data for the gridded area west of Europe (Lat 35o-53oN, Long 0o to 20oW).**  
Data from Eiden and Martinsen (2010).

### Step two: including special areas

Depending on the number of locations that will be employed, Member States may consider that measurements in special areas will be included in a monitoring programme. Marine reserves, Nature 2000 areas and dedicated areas with little or no industrial activity “potential silent areas” are examples of special areas where it could be of interest to obtain measurements. The final decision of their inclusion in the observational programme depends on the number of sensors and the importance of the areas. The recommendation is to initially consider shipping lanes before these areas are included.

### Step three: fine scale considerations

When the final positions are established special concern should be given to the nearby area of these positions. Information on fishing activities might be used to avoid loss of sensors due to unwanted trawling events, which are normally done at low speeds (less than 5 knots). By establishing the trawling activities in the region, for example by using VMS data, the areas to be avoided can be identified. If necessary the position can be adjusted to an area with lower fishing frequency, thereby minimising the probability of loss due to trawling. Further, information on shipwrecks can be used to avoid fishing activities as well. If possible the final position can be adjusted to a position nearby a shipwreck, which is normally avoided by fishers.

It should be underlined that sediment properties (related to attenuation of sound) in an area can vary as well as the vertical properties (sound profile). If possible the adjusted position should be in a place, in which the sediment and the depth are representative for the area.

## 3.4.2 Guidance for presenting the results

Processing of either the measurement and/or the modelling output can provide local or basin-scale statistics of the annual noise in the form of percentage exceedance levels. The rationale that led to Indicator 11.2.1 was associated with a concern that anthropogenic noise might mask important acoustic cues [Tasker et al., (2010)]. If the ambient noise includes loud transient sounds (air gun pulses, passing ships, etc.), the potential for masking of these sounds is limited to some extent by the duration of the relatively quiet periods between these transients. For this reason, TSG Noise considers that information about time dependence is needed in addition to an amplitude distribution. Therefore, TSG Noise recommends that the complete distribution be retained in the form of sound pressure level as a function of time, along with a specified averaging time. If it is not possible to store the full time series, TSG Noise advises the retention of the amplitude distribution for this purpose in

bins of 1 dB, and the associated snapshot duration (see also Part III chapter 2.8). TSG Noise advises MS that the snapshot duration should not exceed one minute.

### 3.4.3 Guidance for interpreting results and setting a baseline

This indicator can be used by the Member States to assess the extent to which good environmental status is being achieved- specifically it will provide the information about the ambient noise levels and trends in European waters, and may enable MS to set a baseline.

Since there is very little information available on the effects of increased ambient noise level, and almost no information that describes the effects in a way usable for any quantitative assessment, TSG Noise cannot give a concrete advice on interpretation of the results at this stage. However monitoring indicator 11.2 will enable Member States to quantify the environmental pressure (expressed as ambient noise level) and trends in these ambient noise levels.

As described in the section 2.4, a baseline can either be defined as: *a) reference state or background levels, or b) a specified/known state.*

For ambient noise the baseline that MS might be able to set is the second of the two options- it is unlikely that there will be many areas in European Seas that can be seen as a reference state that is free from influence by anthropogenic sound sources. However, if it is possible to distinguish between natural and anthropogenic sources then models could be used to estimate baseline noise levels that would be expected in the absence of anthropogenic inputs.

## 3.5 Technical Specifications

### 3.5.1 Specifications for measuring equipment (M2-a)

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of commercially available autonomous devices available to address the need for *in situ* measurement of underwater noise. The performance of these systems is a crucial factor governing the quality of the measured data.

A recent survey by the National Physical Laboratory (UK) suggested that the performance of commercially available systems is sometimes not adequate for the task of absolute measurement of underwater noise (see also part III chapter 2.9). The noise recorders coming to market are often converted from systems designed for other tasks where absolute calibration is not required and high quality recordings are not essential, such as detecting marine mammals, or even recording birdsong. The requirements were discussed in detail in the 2012 TSG Noise report [Van der Graaf, 2012]. However, with the advent of cheap commercial systems, TSG Noise again emphasises the importance of these calibration issues to those procuring systems for use in noise monitoring in response to the Directive.

To prevent procurement of inadequate monitoring equipment, users should make specific requirements of suppliers with regard to performance. Key parameters where performance is sometimes lacking include calibration and self-noise. Full details can be found in Part III chapter 2.9.

### 3.5.2 Averaging method (M2-b)

In Part III chapter 2.8 the pros and cons of different kinds of averaging are explained. Indicator 2 is specified by the Commission Decision of Sep 2010 as: *“Trends in the ambient noise level ... (... average noise level ... over a year)”*, which was interpreted by the TSG Noise report of Feb 2012 as: *“Trends in the annual average of the squared sound pressure associated with ambient noise ... expressed as a level in decibels”*.

In chapter 2.8 the earlier definition was evaluated, by comparing the annual average (arithmetic mean) of the squared sound pressure with other possible metrics. The following four averages of this distribution were considered:

- Arithmetic mean (AM) of snapshots of mean square sound pressure (the TSG Noise interpretation)
- Geometric mean (GM) of the same snapshots (equivalent to arithmetic mean in decibels)
- Median of the same snapshots
- Mode of the same snapshots

The purpose of Indicator 2 is to quantify noise in a frequency range likely to be influenced by shipping. Shipping noise has both permanent and intermittent components, and an annual average will automatically include both. Normally on a year-round case there are no anthropogenic underwater sounds more persistent than shipping, but there might also be some locations at which shipping noise is not the largest contributor to anthropogenic ambient sound in the frequency bands relevant to Indicator 2.

The different averaging methods were evaluated against the following criteria where the method needed to be:

- Robust to minor changes or differences in implementation.
- Physically meaningful and representative of a large enough region to justify its use as an indicator of GES.
- Practical (simple to implement).
- Compatible with comparable regulations or procedures (a desirable property but not essential).

Based on the analysis of available historical data of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), it was concluded that the arithmetic mean initially will be the best option. TSG Noise advises MS to adopt the arithmetic mean. The main considerations in reaching this recommendation are:

- a) the arithmetic mean includes all sounds, so there is no risk of neglecting important ones
- b) the arithmetic mean is independent of snapshot duration

The trend is the trend in the arithmetic mean. In order to establish the statistical significance of this trend, additional statistical information about the distribution is necessary for further details, see Part III of the Monitoring Guidance. TSG Noise recommends that the complete distribution be retained for this purpose in bins of 1 dB.

When an average value for ambient noise is established using the arithmetic mean, the value found for the average will be dominated by the noisiest contribution. Therefore, monitoring in the vicinity of established high shipping density areas (such as commercial traffic lanes); the arithmetic mean is likely to be dominated by this contribution.

### **3.5.3 Standards and definitions for appropriate noise monitoring models**

The modelling approach should take into account representative environmental conditions (oceanography, sea state, bottom, etc.). The results provided by the modelling should be consistent with the averaging methods applied for the measurements. Optionally, the modelling could be done in such a way to make percentile calculation of received level possible at the scale of individual points and at the scale of a region or a basin, if MS require such assessments.

Modelling and input knowledge is likely to improve with the development of new technologies and techniques (operational oceanography, noise from ships, calculation performances, etc.).

If Member States wish to compare calculated historical trends with modern predictions, modelling output should include an evaluation of its sensitivity to modelling inputs (environmental data, anthropogenic data, etc.) and the inherent uncertainties.



### 3.5.4 Examples of appropriate modelling approaches

The physics of underwater sound propagation are generally well understood. The propagation of sound through water is described by the wave or Helmholtz equation, with appropriate boundary conditions. A number of models have been developed to simplify propagation calculations. These models include ray theory, normal mode solutions, and parabolic equation simplifications to the wave equation [Jensen 1994]. Each set of solutions is generally valid and computationally efficient in a limited frequency and range regime, and may involve other limits as well. Ray theory is more appropriate at short range and high frequency, while the other solutions function better at long range and low frequency. [Harrison 1989]. Modelling appropriate for some specific sounds and conditions is still being developed [Reinhal & Dahl 2011, Zampolli *et al* 2013], e.g. the propagation of loud impulsive sounds (from piling, or explosives) in shallow water.

Of the methods described by Jensen *et al* (1994), the most practical are parabolic equation, normal modes and ray theory. A practical method not described in Jensen's book is Weston's flux integral method [Weston 1959]. This method can be applied to arbitrary seabed bathymetry [Weston 1976] and has recently been extended [Harrison 2012] to include convergence effects for an arbitrary sound speed profile.

Examples of appropriate modelling approaches can be found on some open access websites such as the Ocean Acoustics library that contains acoustic modelling software and data. It is supported by the U.S. Office of Naval Research (Ocean Acoustics Program) as a means of publishing software of general use to the international ocean acoustics community (see <http://oalib.hlsresearch.com/>); the AcTUP propagation modelling software is available from the Centre for Marine Science and Technology of Curtin University (see <http://cmst.curtin.edu.au/products/actoolbox.cfm>).

Examples of basic information that is needed as input parameters for modelling are also available; for data about large and many small ship movements the data from Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) can be used since all large merchant vessels are required to carry an AIS-transponder on board (see <http://www.marinetraffic.com/aiss/>).

In present European noise modelling and mapping projects (as described in part III chapters 2.3-2.6) ships are characterised in terms of the source level of an equivalent monopole at a specified depth and TSG Noise advises to continue using this approach. See [de Jong *et al* 2012] for a definition of monopole source level of the equivalent point source. See [Wales & Heitmeyer 2002] for typical (average) values of source level of commercial shipping. Many publications on radiated noise ships, including the ANSI Standard S12.64-2009 [ANSI, 2009] report not the source level but the radiated noise level, while nevertheless referring to this quantity as "source level".

TSG Noise further concludes that further investigation into best practice or even standardised methods is needed. In addition to data describing the source factors that influence propagation (bathymetry, sound velocity profiles) are also needed. Of particular importance in deep water is the sound speed profile, available in the World Ocean Atlas 2009, (see [http://www.nodc.noaa.gov/OC5/WOA09/pr\\_woa09.html](http://www.nodc.noaa.gov/OC5/WOA09/pr_woa09.html)) and absorption of sound in seawater, described on the website of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in the UK (see <http://resource.npl.co.uk/acoustics/techguides/seaabsorption/>). Also some other parameters may be found: global bathymetry (see of particular importance in shallow water is the bathymetry <http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/> (1 arc minute), <http://www.gebco.net/> or [http://gcmd.nasa.gov/records/GCMD\\_DBDBV.html](http://gcmd.nasa.gov/records/GCMD_DBDBV.html)) and sediment composition, often available from geophysical surveys).

For low frequency shipping noise (up to about 100 Hz), the sea surface can be approximated as a perfect reflector with a 180 degree phase change (a so-called «pressure release» surface). For higher frequencies, especially above 1 kHz, a better description is probably needed [Ainslie 2010, Ch 8, pp 362-369]. The NPL website also contains useful information and equations for calculating the speed of sound in sea-water as a function of temperature, salinity and pressure (or depth) (<http://resource.npl.co.uk/acoustics/techguides/soundseawater/>).

A recent modelling approach used to make sound maps is described in the Irish STRIVE Noise report, issued in May 2013.

## 4. Main conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Monitoring impulsive noise

The initial purpose of monitoring impulsive noise is to assess the pressure on the environment, by making available an overview of all loud impulsive low and mid-frequency sound sources, through the year and throughout regional seas. This will enable MS to get an overview of the overall pressure on the environment from these sources.

TSG Noise recommends the **setting up a register of the occurrence of these impulsive sounds**. This is the first step to establish the current level and trend in these impulsive sounds.

Seismic survey, pile-driving, explosives, sonars working at relevant frequencies and some acoustic deterrent devices are the **most important sound-sources that should be considered for inclusion in the register**. Possibly there are additional sources that could be of concern (boomers, sparkers, scientific echo sounders). Since a registry that leaves out part of the sound sources is not useful if the aim is to address cumulative effects of all sources of impulsive noise, and therefore it is recommended that information on all sources should be included in the registry. TSG Noise therefore suggest that data on explosions and from activities of which the sole purpose is defence or national security should be included in the register, on a voluntary basis, but notes that this is a national policy issue.

The **main items in the register**, needed to derive pulse-block days (the number of days that in an area (block) a certain threshold (pulse) is exceeded) as required in the text of the Commission Decision, are:

- Pulse-generating activity
- Day
- Location
- Source level

Additional information about source properties that could be collected, include source spectra, duty cycle, directivity, duration of transmissions and platform speed. Collection of this information would enable improved assessment of the overall pressure on the environment.

Once a register is established, it will be possible to determine the coarse scale spatial and temporal distribution of impulsive noise sources. This quantified assessment of impulsive noise sources could be used in future to determine policy targets. It should also be possible to establish a baseline of “current condition”.

### 4.2 Monitoring ambient noise

TSG Noise concludes that the **combined use of measurements and models** (and possibly sound maps) is the best way for Member States to ascertain levels and trends of ambient noise in the relevant frequency bands. Member States should be careful to balance modelling with appropriate measurements. The first TSG Noise report [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012] describes standards with which that measurement equipment should comply with, along with comments about possible shortcomings of commercially available equipment. Models also require standards and definitions are needed to clarify what is an appropriate model and what is not. TSG Noise provides advice on the standards that models should comply with and will describe modelling approaches that can be used by Member States.

TSG Noise also recommended **standards that measurement equipment** should comply with. This reports notes additional possible shortcomings of commercially available equipment. TSG Noise recognises that standards and definitions are needed to ensure that appropriate models are used. TSG Noise therefore also gave advice on which the standard models should comply with and a proposal for standard models that can be used.

TSG Noise supports and advises the **use of mapping**. The use of mapping which is now being explored for underwater noise monitoring and management has some history and in the process of implementing the MSFD Member States should make use of earlier European experience on air acoustics

There is no requirement for Member States to describe the complete noise field in their waters, a limited number of monitoring stations (measurement locations) would suffice. However TSG Noise concluded that the **use of models will contribute directly to effective ambient noise monitoring and assessment**

TSG Noise has not defined exact locations for deploying equipment necessary to monitor relevant frequency bands of ambient noise. However, TSG Noise advises **Member States within a sub region to work together to establish an ambient noise monitoring system**, and TSG Noise has provided a set of rules for the design of a monitoring strategy. Furthermore, TSG has provided **guidance for reporting results**.

The advantages and disadvantages of different averaging methods (arithmetic mean, geometric mean, median and mode) are reviewed, and TSG Noise **recommends that Member States adopt the arithmetic mean**.

In order to establish the statistical significance of the trend, additional statistical information about the distribution is necessary. Until better advice becomes available, TSG Noise recommends that the **complete distribution be retained for this purpose in bins of 1 dB**.

Additional and background information is provide in **Part III of the Monitoring Guidance** that includes further information, substantiation and detailed references.

# **European Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

## **MONITORING GUIDANCE FOR UNDERWATER NOISE IN EUROPEAN SEAS**

### **PART III – Background Information and Annexes**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Technical Subgroup on Underwater Noise and other forms of energy (TSG Noise)**

Interim Guidance Report

May 2013

This report can be cited as follows:

Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas - 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Technical Subgroup on Underwater noise (TSG Noise). Part III Background Information and Annexes. Interim Guidance Report. May, 2013.

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Interim Guidance Report:

TSG Noise was tasked to deliver guidance so that European Member States could initiate programmes for underwater noise monitoring. As monitoring must be operational by 2014, first guidance was required by spring 2013. The Interim Guidance report provides the basis for the noise monitoring programme however since new information continues to be compiled TSG Noise can review and update the guidance later in 2013. In addition, the results and feedback that may arise at the training workshop (preliminary planned now for Autumn 2013) can be incorporated. This also means the inclusion of new findings into the design of the register for impulsive noise generating activities, and from currently running initiatives around the Baltic Sea, The Netherlands, Germany and Ireland, for ambient noise. For this reason this report has been designated as an interim guidance until Autumn 2013.

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**Disclaimer:** This interim guidance report has been prepared by a group of experts nominated by EU Member States and Stakeholders. It provides technical advice and options for the operational implementation of monitoring MSFD Descriptor 11 on Underwater Noise. It does not constitute an official opinion of the European Commission, nor of the participating Institutions and EU Member States.

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## Summary

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requires European Member States (MS) to develop strategies that should lead to programmes of measures that achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in European Seas. As an essential step reaching good environmental status, MS should establish **monitoring programmes for assessment**, enabling the state of the marine waters concerned to be evaluated on a regular basis.

In 2010, in Commission Decision 2010/477/EU, criteria and methodological standards on GES of marine waters were published. Two indicators were described for Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy): Indicator 11.1.1 on low and mid frequency impulsive sounds and Indicator 11.2.1 on continuous low frequency sound (ambient noise).

As a follow up to the Commission Decision, the Marine Directors in 2010 agreed to establish a Technical Subgroup (TSG) under the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) for further development of Descriptor 11 Noise/Energy. TSG (Underwater) Noise in 2011 focused on clarifying the purpose, use and limitation of the indicators and described methodology that would be unambiguous, effective and practicable. In February 2012, TSG Noise delivered its first report [Van der Graaf et al., 2012]<sup>1</sup>. For both the impulsive and the ambient noise indicators significant progress was made to their practical implementation, and most ambiguities were solved.

In December 2011, EU Marine Directors requested the continuation of TSG Noise, and the group was tasked with recommending how MS might best make the indicators of the Commission Decision operational. TSG Noise was asked first to provide monitoring guidance that could be used by MS in establishing monitoring schemes for underwater noise in their marine waters. Further work includes providing suggestions for (future) target setting; for addressing the biological impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise and to evaluate new information on the effects of sound on marine biota, with the view to considering indicators of noise effects.

The present document is **Part III** of the *Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas* (Interim Guidance Report) and provides MS with the background information, examples and references needed to commence the monitoring required to implement this aspect of MSFD. TSG Noise has focussed on ambiguities, uncertainties and other shortcomings that may hinder monitoring initiatives and has provided solutions, and describes methodology for monitoring both impulsive and ambient noise in such a way that information needed for management and policy can be collected in a cost-effective way. TSG Noise has no doubt that further detailed issues will arise once monitoring starts, but hopes the principles laid out in this guidance will help resolve these.

The Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise is structured, as follows:

- Part I: Executive Summary & Recommendations,
- Part II: Monitoring Guidance Specification, and
- **Part III: Background Information and Annexes.**

Part I of the Monitoring Guidance is the executive summary for policy and decision makers responsible for the adoption and implementation of MSFD at national level. It provides the key outcomes and recommendations presented in Part II that support the practical guidance for MS and will, enable assessment of the current level of pressure.

Part II, is the main report of the Monitoring Guidance, that provides the specifications for the monitoring of underwater noise, with a dedicated section on impulsive noise (Criterion 11.1 of the Commission Decision) and ambient noise (Criterion 11.2 of the Commission Decision). It provides a detailed guide to those who will implement the monitoring/modelling, and noise registration technical specifications.

Part III presents the Background Information and Annexes, is not part of the guidance, but is added for additional information, examples and list of references that supported the Monitoring Guidance specifications.

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<sup>1</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> TSG Noise Report (27 February 2012) is available online:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/MSFD\\_reportTSG\\_Noise.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/MSFD_reportTSG_Noise.pdf)



## **1. Introduction**

This document Part III presents the background information, examples, the annexes, including references and glossary and is added for additional information, examples and references that supported the Monitoring Guidance.

In the following chapters, contributions from various authors in the form of short articles are presented. These deal with various relevant topics and examples of scientific substantiation and project-related information that provide additional insight that support the recommendations of TSG Noise provided in the Monitoring Guidance.

## 2. Background information and further substantiation

### 2.1 Guidance on underwater sound sources to be included in the Register of Low and Medium Frequency Sources of Impulsive Sound

(Authors: M.A. Ainslie & R.P.A. Dekeling)

#### Summary

The purpose of this section is to substantiate the advice of TSG Noise to MS on the choice of thresholds of source level and proxies for inclusion in the Noise Register associated with the implementation of Indicator 11.1.1. Our first step is to choose a relevant metric for «significant impact». The value of source level then follows from the choice of distance for potentially significant impact and of propagation model used to convert from that distance to a source level. Conversion to a suitable proxy is necessary for those sources for which source level is not an appropriate measure.

For the most relevant sources of low and mid-frequency impulsive noise minimum thresholds for uptake in the register are derived. Technical Sub-group Underwater Noise (TSG Noise) concludes that for pile-drivers no minimum threshold should be used and that all pile-driving activities should be registered. For sonars, air-guns, acoustic deterrents<sup>2</sup> and explosions, minimum thresholds can be used and values for these minimum thresholds are recommended.

TSG Noise concludes that it is useful to distinguish between sources of different level. To register detailed information on levels will be too complicated or may hamper information gathering. A compromise is offered, suggesting source level data collection in 10 dB bins.

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

The Commission Decision of September 2010 requires EU Member States (MS) to address anthropogenic sound sources that may result in significant impact, via Indicator 11.1.1 of GES (henceforth abbreviated as “Indicator 1”). MS will need to collect data on loud low- and mid-frequency impulsive sound sources, and the first TSG Noise report, in line with the earlier TG11-report [Tasker *et al.*, 2010], proposes to achieve this by establishing a register of the occurrence of these sources. The next work item for TSG Noise was to establish a monitoring guidance, giving concrete guidance which sources should be taken up in the register and how the data should be collected. While working on its first report, TSG Noise attempted to distinguish between sound sources that may entail significant impact and sources that were not, as a selection criterion to decide whether sources should be taken up in the register, but this could not be completed in the time available in 2011.

At the TSG Noise meeting of April 2012 in Spain, this issue was discussed and TSG Noise concluded that some adaptation to the earlier approach (which was based on the text of the Commission Decision) was needed. In the Spain meeting TSG Noise concluded that:

- Given uncertain knowledge of which sources cause significant impact, it is helpful to distinguish between a threshold for inclusion in the source register (henceforth, “the Register”) and the threshold that may cause significant impact, i.e.: uptake in the Register does not necessarily need to mean that the source is actually causing ‘significant’ impact; we do not yet know when loud sources causes ‘significant’ impact.
- We propose to adopt a lower threshold for the Register than for Indicator 1. Doing so enables us to deal with this uncertainty by choosing a deliberately low threshold for the Register; thus,

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<sup>2</sup> The term “acoustic deterrents” is a general term to indicate acoustic sources use primary purpose is to deter an animal from approaching an area, regardless of the reason for doing so, and regardless of source level. It includes devices commonly known as “acoustic harassment devices” (abbreviated “AHD”) as well as “acoustic deterrent devices” (abbreviated “ADD”).

the Register would only exclude sources unlikely to have significant impact, resulting in a lower threshold for inclusion than including those that are likely to have significant impact.

- The Register will include quantitative information about the sources; TSG Noise will advise what extra information (e.g. source level, frequency of use, directivity index) is needed in the register.
- Registration in (e.g. 10 dB (equivalent)) bins

The initial purpose of this indicator is to assess the pressures on the marine environment, i.e. an overview of all loud impulsive low and mid-frequency sound sources, through the year and through areas. This will enable MS to get an overview of the overall pressure on the environment from these sources, which has not been achieved previously (see 1<sup>st</sup> report of TSG Noise, Feb 2012).

To achieve this target, we should make sure that we register all relevant sources to assess the pressure on the environment. At the same time, it should be ensured that registration efforts are not wasted on low energy sources that are probably insignificant. Because we cannot at this time determine when sources are significant, we will register all sources that have the potential for significant impact from an ecological perspective (population or local population level). We are not saying that no animals are adversely affected by omitted sources; only that any effect is not considered significant at the population or local population level. This means that at this stage we will only exclude the sources that are less likely to have significant impact from this ecological perspective; for the sources that we will register the data will be collected in bins to be able to differentiate between very loud sources and sources that might only have limited impact.

In this chapter the rationale to decide whether a sound source needs to be taken up in the register is explained:

- The register should be workable, and preferably based on information already available;
- The register needs to ensure that all relevant sound sources of concern will be included;
- Registering of sound sources that are less likely to be of relevance should be avoided.

This chapter addresses the last issue, and describes a methodology for determining which sources are less likely to result in significant impact and that may be excluded from registration. It does so by first describing “significant impact” and the relation between received levels and effect. By first making a precautionary choice for the relevant parameters (received levels) and describing received levels and propagation loss, we can get insight into the source levels needed for a likely effect, depending on the type of source and how the source is used. As a final step, for cases where the source level is difficult to obtain, the source level is converted to a more convenient proxy.

#### TERMINOLOGY AND DECIBEL REFERENCE VALUES

The terminology in this document follows the recommendations from the international workshop on acoustic standards that was held in Delft (The Netherlands) in February 2011, as described in a consensus report for the Dutch government (Ainslie (ed.) 2011); in this meeting consensus was reached on the definitions contained in that document making a suitable starting point from which to construct an international standard.

The consensus report provides for a choice between three alternative conventions for reference values associated with levels cited in decibels: the ‘10lgP rule’, by which the reference values are proportional to power ( $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2$  for SPL and  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ s}$  for SEL); the ‘20lgA rule’, by which the reference values are proportional to the square root of power ( $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  and  $1 \mu\text{Pa s}^{1/2}$ ); and a third, mixed rule, by which a choice is made between power and root power on a case by case basis, according to the perceived convention. This report follows the mixed rule, with the 20lgA convention for some quantities (e.g.,  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  for SPL and  $1 \mu\text{Pa m}$  for source level<sup>3</sup>) and the 10lgP convention for others (e.g.,  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ s}$  for SEL and  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$  for energy source level).

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<sup>3</sup> The reference value “1 uPa @ 1 m”, though widely used, is avoided here because it is not an SI unit. The intended meaning is the same.

### WHAT IS MEANT BY ‘SIGNIFICANT IMPACT’?

In the first report of TSG Noise [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012] it was explained that the indicator for impulsive noise would address ‘displacement’, i.e. ‘severe and/or sustained and/or long-term avoidance of an area’. In the methodology described below thresholds at which this effect was found in marine animals are used. Most of the available data about effects of sound on the marine environment describes effects on marine mammals; these animals are dependent on using sound, and many species of marine mammals are known to be sensitive to sound. Therefore, for determination of thresholds, TSG Noise used data on the response thresholds of marine mammals, but this does not exclude the possibility that species from another group/family would show responses at lower levels. TSG Noise also realises that there are also observations of impact on fish from airguns and pile driving where the fish has undertaken both severe and/or sustained displacements and that displacement can include vertical migrations.

### SOUND PRESSURE LEVEL OR SOUND EXPOSURE LEVEL?

An evaluation of possible metrics that is most appropriate for assessment of behavioural effect can be found in [Southall *et al.*, 2007]. In this landmark publication it was suggested that sound pressure levels were the best available metric for assessing behavioural effects:

*Considering all of these limitations and the nature of the available data, as a practical matter, we use SPL as the acoustic metric for the behavioural analyses given below. Where necessary and appropriate, simple assumptions regarding transmission loss were applied to predict RLs. This was done only for studies that provided sufficient information on source and environmental characteristics.*

*Our approach does not presume that SPL is necessarily the acoustic metric best correlated with behavioural changes (significant or otherwise). In particular, SPL fails to account for the duration of exposure whereas this is captured using SEL. SPL is the metric that has most often been measured or estimated during disturbance studies, however. Thus, it is currently the best metric with which to assess the available behavioural response data.*

For the scope of this document (excluding the insignificant sources) we adopt this approach, although TSG Noise notes that SPL may not be the applicable metric for assessing/ understanding behavioural effects in fish. When using SPL we do not consider the accumulated received SEL over the animal’s full duration of exposure but only the actual, often highest, experienced level of sounds. For some types of sound the SPL is not the most practical metric. For these cases, we will use a different approach and prefer single pulse SEL (as opposed to cumulative SEL) to SPL. This approach applies for sounds with an explicitly impulsive character, these sounds were called ‘pulses’ by Southall *et al.* [2007] (brief, broadband, atonal, transients which are characterized by a relatively rapid rise-time to maximum pressure followed by a decay that may include a period of diminishing and oscillating maximal and minimal pressures). Examples of pulses are sounds from explosions, gunshots, sonic booms, seismic airgun pulses, and pile driving strikes; see Southall *et al.* [2007]. Furthermore, single pulse SEL is proposed by Southall as a metric for behavioural response to single pulses.

The reason for this approach is that for short pulses, changes in the shape of the pulse can occur over time (e.g., due to multipath propagation) so that care is needed in the interpretation of reported SPL or zero to peak sound pressure values. For this reason, the (single pulse) source energy (characterized by the energy source level  $SL_E$ ; [Ainslie (2010)]), which is not affected by changes in pulse shape, is a more robust measure than zero to peak, peak to peak or RMS sound pressure for the characterization of short pulses and *single-pulse* SEL is a more practical measure for reporting the received levels. (See Ainslie 2010, ch 10, page 525).

### WEIGHTED OR UNWEIGHTED?

For the purpose of a criterion for inclusion in the Register, unweighted levels are preferred to weighted ones. This is done for simplicity (avoids complication of which weighting to use). Weighting can be applied in a later process and might require different weighting functions based on which functional

hearing group of animals is considered. Therefore, including unweighted levels in the Register allows for different types of analysis on a later phase.

#### SOURCE LEVEL OR OTHER SOURCE PARAMETERS?

Until now the TSG has worked towards source level (SL) and this memo continues in this direction. For some types of sources, SL is unsuitable either because the source cannot be characterised in terms of SL or because it is not usual to do so, and for such sources TSG Noise advises converting the appropriate source level threshold into a threshold for a suitable proxy. One example is for a pile driver, for which the report of the February 2011 international workshop concludes that no definition is available [TNO, 2011]. For other sources (e.g. explosives) even though an (energy) source level is sometimes used (and well defined in deep water at least, at long distances from the source), we advise use of a proxy in terms of equivalent TNT charge mass in order to eliminate the need for the conversion of this charge mass to a source level. Specific proxies advised are the equivalent TNT charges mass of explosives, the hammer energy of an impact pile driver and the source level of an air gun array.

### 2.2.1 Choice of SEL or SPL threshold for inclusion in the Register

#### MULTIPLE EXPLICITLY IMPULSIVE SOUNDS (SEL THRESHOLD FOR "SOUTHALL ET AL. PULSES")

We have made a brief summary of the scarce information currently available concerning displacement, this was also described in the 1<sup>st</sup> TSG Noise report.

Danish work [Tougaard *et al.*, 2012] mentions 'received levels of sound were, on average, 140 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa (peak-peak) at' the distance within which harbour porpoises<sup>4</sup> were observed to avoid impulsive sounds from a pile driver. This is expressed in terms of peak-to-peak sound pressure, which makes it difficult to use within the present framework.

Some work has been done in Germany at the "alpha-ventus" wind park. Some of this has been published in a report by Wittekind *et al.* [2010] (*Auswirkungen des Baus des Offshore-Testfelds „alpha ventus“ auf marine Säugetiere*). This publication reports that porpoises react to sound for a single pulse with SEL = 140 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa<sup>2</sup> s or higher.

Use is made of these values from field data in preference to data available from laboratory work or otherwise artificially constrained situations: e.g. Lucke made TTS-measurements of harbour porpoises after exposure to air gun sounds [Lucke *et al.*, 2009]. In this work consistent "aversive behaviour" was noted when single-pulse SEL-values exceeded 145 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa<sup>2</sup> s; Kastelein observed behavioural changes at lower values (single pulse SEL of 115 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa<sup>2</sup> s) [Kastelein *et al.*, 2011], but in an artificial setting with very low background noise levels (see e.g. Ellison *et al.* [2011] for considerations on background noise levels).

Therefore we propose SEL<sub>0</sub> = 140 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa<sup>2</sup> s.

#### SINGLE EXPLICITLY IMPULSIVE SOUNDS (SEL THRESHOLD FOR A SINGLE "SOUTHALL ET AL. PULSE", SUCH AS AN EXPLOSION)

For most of the activities generating impulsive sounds considered to have effect on animals (piling, sonar, seismic) the sounds will be transmitted repeatedly for longer durations (e.g. piling for a wind

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<sup>4</sup> Harbour porpoises are known as the one of the most sensitive marine animals, this has been shown for physical effects, but also for behavioural effects, for this reason this species has been used in this approach, implying use of a low limit and hence a conservative approach [Southall *et al.*, 2007; Lucke *et al.*, 2009; Kastelein, 2011]. A diversity of species has however been studied, though, regarding current knowledge less sensitive than the harbour porpoise.

turbine, a sonar exercise or a complete seismic survey) and exposure to these repeated impulsive sounds induces the reaction. Explosions, and certainly most of the large explosions, are often not repeated events: in NW-Europe, the most relevant activity is clearing of legacy ammunition, demolition of oil extracting constructions and within geological research. Most studies on the effect of explosions focus on physiological damage to marine life, and not on behavioural effects. However, for this specific type of sound Southall *et al.* [2007] also suggested that these should be treated separately and suggested to use higher thresholds for behavioural effects; Southall *et al.* [2007] proposed the TTS-value as threshold for behavioural impact of marine mammals. It is not known to the present authors whether animal displacement is a relevant effect of these single impulsive sounds. Nevertheless it is considered desirable to keep sources of single "Southall *et al.* pulses" (like explosions associated with the detonation of individual mines) in the Register, and we follow this proposal of Southall *et al.* [2007] which means that the threshold for a single pulse is higher than that for multiple pulses. While for multiple explosions in a short time period (e.g. a (military) exercise or research campaign) the lower threshold for multiple explicitly impulsive sounds could be used, this would make any difference for multiple explosions of mass less than 8 g, which are infrequent events. For this reason, TSG Noise recommends a threshold for inclusion of that is based on single explosions, irrespective of whether the actual event to be registered involves single or multiple explosions.

For the single pulse event we propose<sup>5</sup> to use the TTS-onset values found by Lucke as threshold  $SEL_0 = SEL_{TTS} = 164.3 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ s}$  from [Lucke *et al.*, 2009].

#### NON-PULSE SOUNDS, INCLUDING SONAR (SPL THRESHOLD FOR "SOUTHALL ET AL. 2007 NON-PULSES")

There are a number of research programmes addressing the effect of sonar on cetaceans and the knowledge is growing rapidly, and by now there are some (peer-reviewed) publications on the behavioural effects of sonar on cetaceans.

In this approach we decided to make use of the most recent publications available, firstly the study on the effect of sonar on beaked whales [Tyack *et al.*, 2011]. In this publication a value for interruption of echo location behaviour at SPL = 140 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$  for beaked whale exposure to mid-frequency sounds is suggested.<sup>6</sup> However, recently it was suggested that at lower levels, from 120-130 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$ , there was an increased risk of severe behavioural responses, although there are large differences across species - long-finned pilot whales showing little response below 150 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}$ , but for killer whales and sperm whales response were noted at the above-mentioned lower levels [Miller *et al.*, 2012]. Even lower response thresholds were found for harbour porpoises in a laboratory setting (Kastelein, 2012). Although this work provides useful information of relative impact of different frequencies and signals, the authors do not consider measurements in a controlled laboratory setting to be representative of the natural environment.

Here we assume that  $SPL_0 = 130 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa}$  can be used as disturbance level for marine mammals.

### 2.3.1 Choice of propagation loss model

Our purpose is to identify a source level threshold that is both realistic and conservative. This implies calculation of a reasonable lower limit on propagation loss (PL). Absorption is not relevant<sup>7</sup> at the frequencies of this indicator (low- and medium frequency i.e. below 10 kHz) and ranges (~ 1 km) considered here and therefore not used in the PL model.

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote number 4.

<sup>6</sup> From p7, "Our results support a ... criterion of about 140 dB SPL for beaked whale exposure to mid-frequency sounds."

<sup>7</sup> At 1 kHz, absorption is less than 0.1 dB/km, see <http://resource.npl.co.uk/acoustics/techguides/seaabsorp>

## SHALLOW WATER

At ranges of interest we expect mode stripping to give a conservative (lower limit) PL value (spherical and cylindrical spreading regions are restricted to distances up to a few water depths). For the sediment we choose medium sand because this results in good low frequency waveguide (by comparison, clay, silt and gravel are poor reflectors of sound [Ainslie 2010]).

Long range shallow water propagation at distances  $R$  of interest can be described by mode stripping, i.e. (see Ainslie 2010 chapter 9, pp 452-458)

$$PL(R) = 15 \log_{10} (R / r_{ref}) + 5 \log_{10} (\eta H / \pi r_{ref}) \quad (1)$$

with:

$\eta$  = reflection loss gradient =  $1/4$  (representative of sand)

$H$  = water depth = 20 m

$r_{ref}$  = 1 m

This equation, of the form  $PL = \text{constant} + 15 \log R$ , is more realistic than (say) cylindrical spreading, and by taking lowest reasonable values of  $\eta$  and  $H$  is a reasonable value for the shallow waters that are of interest; low frequency sound does not propagate well in water of depth less than 20 m. We therefore adopt the criterion

$$SL_E > SEL_0 + PL, \quad (2)$$

with PL given by eq (1). The equivalent inequality relating SL to SPL is

$$SL > SPL_0 + PL. \quad (3)$$

## DEEP WATER

In deep water, we assume spherical spreading at short range, followed by cylindrical spreading (CS). For CS in a surface duct (surface sound speed  $c$ , sound speed gradient  $g$  and duct thickness  $D$ ) we use (see Ainslie, 2010 chapter 9):

$$PL = 10 \log_{10} (R / r_{ref}) + 5 \log_{10} [c D / (8g r_{ref}^2)], \quad [R > (c D / 8g)^{1/2}] \quad (4)$$

Calculations with  $c = 1490$  m/s,  $D = 100$  m,  $g = 0.016$  /s show that deep water propagation loss is higher than the shallow water loss in the range 0-5 km. While a higher threshold could be considered for deep waters, for simplicity we advise use of a single threshold for data registration, irrespective of water depth. In subsequent analysis of register data it will be possible to distinguish between the very loud sources and the sources of less relevance.

### 2.4.1 Choice of distance for potentially significant impact

We have to make a decision about the range or area within which displacement can be considered to be significant. In the reports of studies with Harbour Porpoises carried out in Germany and Denmark, displacement ranges around wind farm construction sites of magnitude 20 km are mentioned, implying an area of ca. 1250 km<sup>2</sup>. At this stage, there is concern that these kind of disturbance in combination with numbers of other similar events could lead to population level effects.

We do not know at what stage cumulative displacement effects will have a significant impact. However, a usable consideration on significance can be found in Southall *et al.*, [2007], page 448:

*The NRC (2005) argued that, although the duration of behaviours likely to affect vital rates is believed to be particularly significant, current scientific*

*knowledge is insufficient to support an analytical treatment of biological significance and ad hoc criteria are needed in the interim. Here, substantive behavioural reactions to noise exposure (such as disruption of critical life functions, displacement, or avoidance of important habitat) are considered more likely to be significant if they last more than one diel period, or recur on subsequent days. Consequently, a reaction lasting less than 24 h and not recurring on subsequent days is not regarded as particularly severe unless it could directly affect survival or reproduction.*

This time-period is too long if we want to make sure that we stay in the ‘no-effect’ range. For instance, important species like harbour porpoises have a high digestive rate and have to forage many times per day (see e.g. [Kastelein *et al.*, 1997]). If evasive movement influences its ability to forage for several hours, a porpoise already starts depleting energy reserves. The Commission Decision of 2010 requires MS to assess the activities per day, but that does not mean that duration of the response must be on the order of one day, exposure of shorter duration can have negative effects; TSG Noise therefore advises to start registering sources that have the potential for displacement. Further, we want to make a translation from ‘time’ to ‘distance’. And for the chosen value for distance to be acceptable, we advise a precautionary value but avoid choosing a value that is unnecessarily low and thereby unworkable.

This was discussed within TSG Noise in the October 2012 meeting in Ireland. For instance, considering the possible effects at zero range would lead to an unworkable situation - we do not use that approach when assessing other forms of pollution. For this particular effect, the minimum for the range of interest would be at a scale less likely to have a significant habitat loss. TSG Noise initially proposes to use the (1000 m) range to take up sources in the register, but this could be reviewed at a later stage (e.g. the foreseen 6-year review of the Commission Decision on the indicators in 2016).

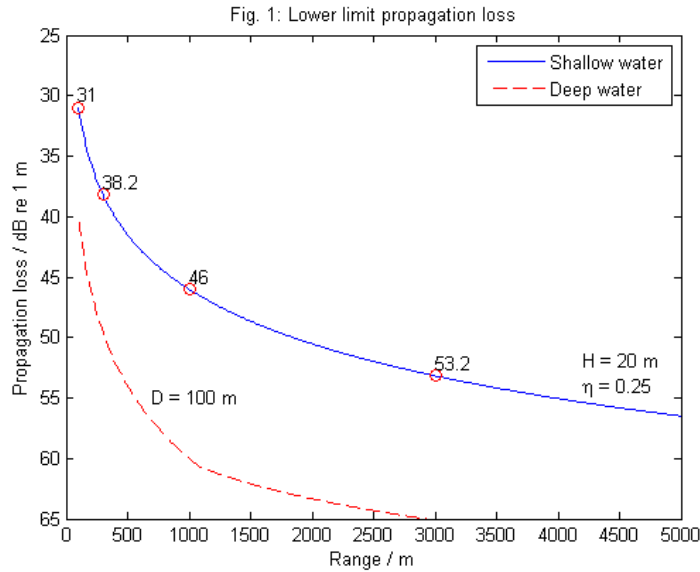
The PL over such a range can easily be calculated using the methodology described above for shallow water. For several possible ranges the PL is shown in Table 1.

Range	PL [dB re 1 m]	SL <sub>E</sub> needed [dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{m}^2 \text{s}$ ] <sup>8</sup>
100 m	31.0	171.0
300 m	38.2	178.2
1000 m	46.0	186.0
3000 m	53.2	193.2

**Table 1: Propagation loss (PL) for different ranges and energy source level (SL<sub>E</sub>) that would lead to the single pulse SEL value of 140 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{s}$  for multiple-pulse sources (like piling and airguns) at that range.**

<sup>8</sup> The reference value is sometimes written «1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{s}$  @ 1 m» instead of «1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{m}^2 \text{s}$ ». The latter is preferred because «1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{s}$  @ 1 m» is not an SI unit. The intended meaning is the same.

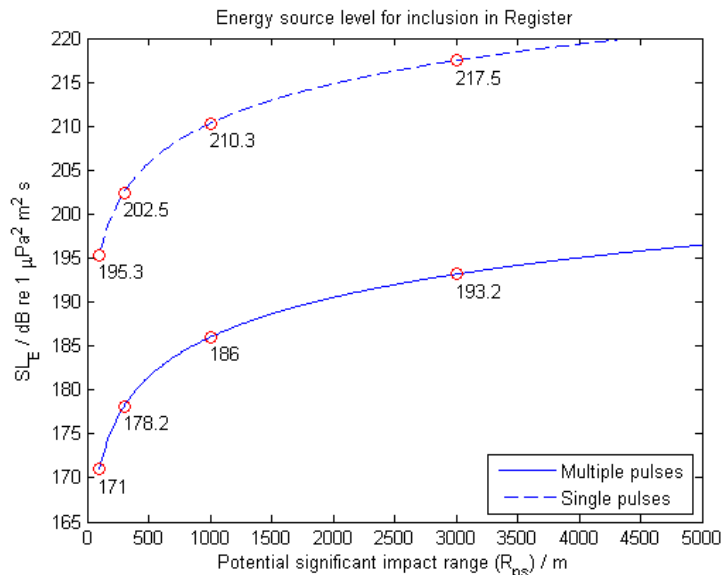




**Figure 1: Propagation loss [dB re 1 m] vs range [m]. The solid blue line in the above figure shows the expected lower limit for propagation loss in shallow water.**

PL is calculated using eq (1), which assumes negligible absorption and is therefore independent of frequency. Eq (1) is intended to provide a lower limit on PL and is therefore precautionary. The estimated lower limit for PL in deep water (dashed red line) is higher than the shallow water lower limit, so the shallow water curve may be used as an overall (conservative) lower limit for effects up to 5 km.

Since we are interested in effects at distances of order 1000 m range we propose that we use the  $SL_E$  value obtained for this range as the minimum to take up multiple pulse sources in the register: 186 dB re  $1 \mu Pa^2 m^2 s$ .



**Figure 2: Energy source level threshold [dB re  $1 \mu Pa^2 m^2 s$ ] vs significant impact range [m]**

Since we are interested in effects at distances of order 1000 m we propose that we use the  $SL_E$  value obtained for this range as the minimum to take up single pulse sources in the register: 210 dB re  $1 \mu Pa^2 m^2 s$ .

Range	PL [dB re 1 m]	SL <sub>E</sub> needed [dB re 1 μPa <sup>2</sup> m <sup>2</sup> s]
100 m	31.0	195.3
300 m	38.2	202.5
1000 m	46.0	210.3
3000 m	53.2	217.5

Table 2: PL for different ranges and SLE that would lead to the single-pulse SEL value of 164.3 dB re 1 μPa<sup>2</sup> s for single pulse sources (explosives) at that range. The conversion to TNT charge mass is made in Table 4.

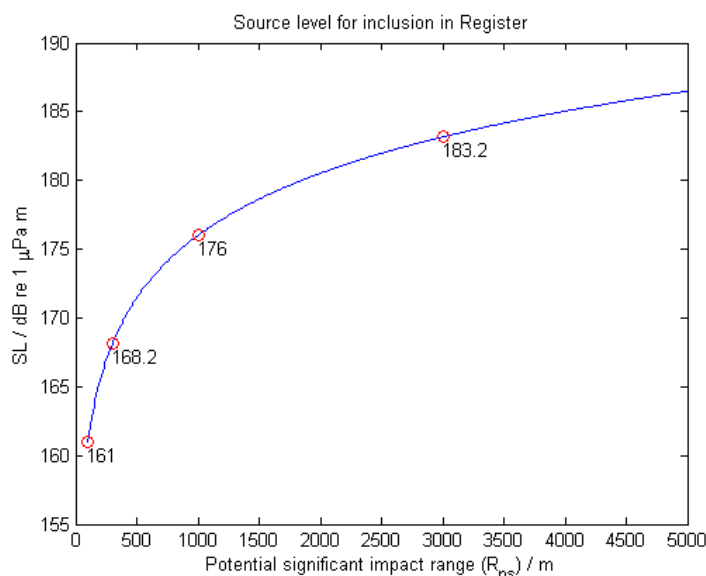


Figure 3: Source level threshold [dB re 1 μPa m] vs significant impact range [m]

Range	PL [dB re 1 m]	SL needed [dB re 1 μPa m] <sup>9</sup>
100 m	31.0	161.0
300 m	38.2	168.2
1000 m	46.0	176.0
3000 m	53.2	183.2

Table 3: PL for different ranges and SL that would lead to the single-pulse SPL-value of 130 dB re 1 μPa for non-impulsive sources (sonars) at that range.

Since we are interested in effects at distances of order 1000 m we propose that we use the SL value obtained for this range as the minimum to take up non-pulse sources in the register: 176 dB re 1 μPa m.

### 2.5.1 Choice of proxy and implications

Sources other than sonars and acoustic deterrents are rarely characterised by their source level (whether SL or SL<sub>E</sub>). For each source it is convenient – and for some sources, essential – to find a proxy that is more widely used and still makes sense.

The acoustic strength of sonars and acoustic deterrents is routinely reported in terms of source level, so no proxy is needed for these. The strength of explosions is widely reported in terms of TNT

<sup>9</sup> The reference value is sometimes written «1 μPa @ 1 m» instead of «1 μPa m». The latter is preferred because «1 μPa @ 1 m» is not an SI unit, but the intended meaning is the same.

equivalent charge mass ( $m_{\text{TNTeq}}$ ). The strength of airgun arrays is widely reported in terms of their far-field source signature (product of distance from the airgun array and far-field sound pressure at that distance, usually in the vertical direction, immediately beneath the array), the maximum magnitude of which is known as “source strength”  $A$  [Dragoset 2000]. This quantity is related to the zero to peak source level [Ainslie (2010), p431] of the dipole formed by airgun array plus surface image according to

$$SL_{zp} = 10 \log_{10} (A^2 / (\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2))$$

The quantity  $SL_{zp}$  is referred to by [Ainslie *et al.*, 2011] as “peak pressure dipole source level”

The strength of impact of pile drivers is sometimes reported in terms of source level, but doing so leads to problems of interpretation [Ainslie *et al.*, 2012, “Aquatic Noise 2012”]. Instead we propose hammer energy ( $E_{\text{hammer}}$ ) as a suitable proxy.

## 2.6.1 Conversion to proxies

### AIRGUN ARRAY

The acoustic strength of an airgun array can be characterised by its zero to peak source level  $SL_{zp}$

If one can characterise the pulse of an air gun array by a single cycle of period  $\tau$ ; then:

$$SL_E = 10 \log_{10} [(1/2) \tau / \text{s}] + SL_{zp} \quad (7)$$

Combined with  $SL_E = 186.0 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$  gives  $SL_{zp} = 209.0 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$ , ( $\tau = 10 \text{ ms}$  assumed; period of the one cycle).

Notes:

- Source level of an airgun array is measured in the direction of its main beam. For the environmental relevance, the source level in the horizontal plane is preferred and therefore information on directivity should preferably be added. If this is not possible the usually provided value in the vertical direction will be used (acknowledging that this overestimates the amount of energy trapped in water column)
- Because the strength of an airgun array is specified in terms of peak sound pressure and because peak pressure is sensitive to bandwidth, it becomes necessary to specify a frequency band. Based on the Descriptor text, the range 10 Hz to 10 kHz seems appropriate. However, there might be a case for lowering the upper limit of this frequency range to 1 kHz. This is

because in reality what matters is SLE rather than  $SL_{zp}$ , and the integral  $\int p(t)^2 dt$  is dominated (because of the assumed 10 ms period) by sounds ca. 100 Hz.

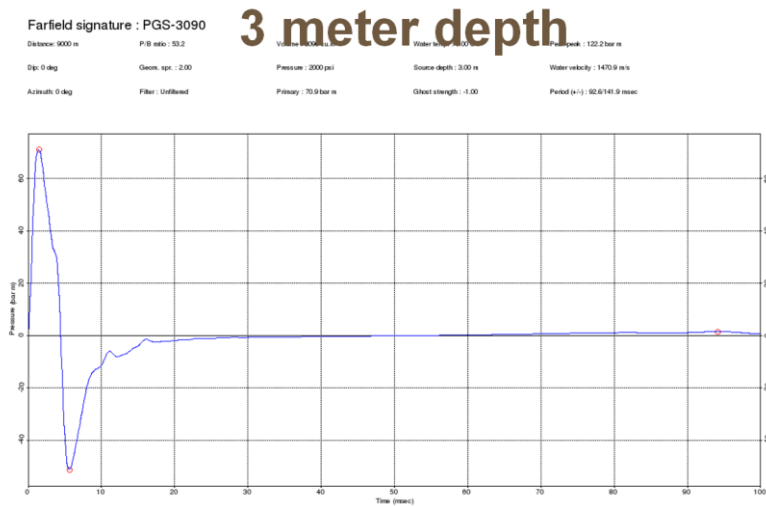


Figure 4: Farfield signature: PGS-3090; 3 m depth: Airgun signature in bar metres (bar m) (supplied by W Pramik, Geokinetics).

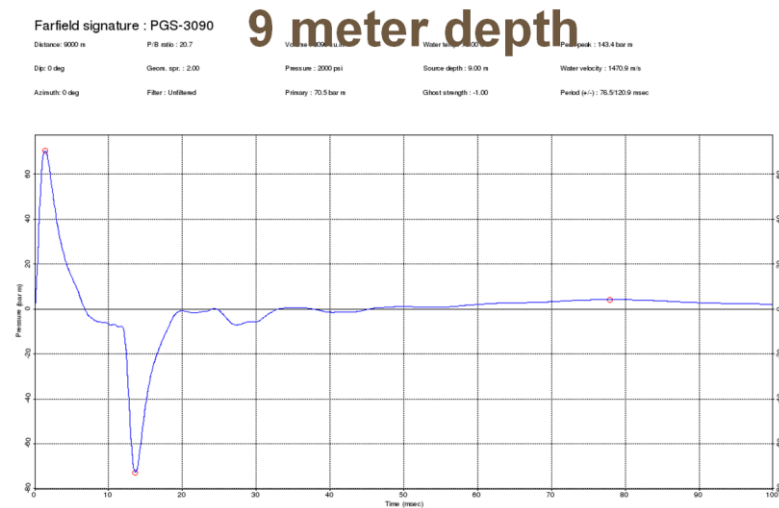


Figure 5: Farfield signature: PGS-3090; 9 m depth: Airgun signature in bar metres (bar m) (supplied by W Pramik, Geokinetics).

The duration of the first full cycle is between 10 ms and 20 ms. In both cases the source strength A is about 67 bar m, corresponding to a zero to peak source level of 257 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa m.

### EXPLOSIONS

Explosives are usually characterised by means of their “equivalent TNT charge mass”, defined as the mass of TNT that would release the same amount of explosive energy. This mass, denoted “ $m_{TNTeq}$ ”, is related to  $SL_E$  via [Ainslie 2010] (excluding bubble pulses)

$$SL_E = 231 + 10\log_{10}(m_{TNTeq}/kg) \tag{10}$$

$$m_{TNTeq} = 10^{(SL_E-231)/10} \text{ kg} \tag{11}$$

substituting  $SL_E = 210.3 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$  for a single explosion gives  $m_{TNTeq} = 8 \text{ g}$ .

IMPACT PILE DRIVER

The international workshop of February 2011 concluded that a definition of source level for a pile driver is not yet available [Ainslie (ed) 2011]. Instead impact pile drivers are usually characterised by means of their hammer energy (sum of potential and kinetic energy at the moment of impact with the pile), providing a suitable proxy. The energy radiated as sound can be expressed as a proportion of the hammer energy

$$(E_{ac})_{pile} = \mu E_{hammer}, \tag{5}$$

where  $\mu$  is the constant of proportionality.

It is straightforward to convert the energy source level threshold to an energy threshold defined as the acoustic energy that would be radiated from an omnidirectional source of energy source level equal to the  $SL_E$  threshold.

$$(E_{ac})_{threshold} = 10^{(SL_E - 170.7)/10} \text{ J} \tag{6}$$

Using Eqs (5) and (6), one can then compare the energies instead of the source level. Requiring their right hand sides to be equal results in the following expression for  $E_{hammer}$

$$E_{hammer} = \frac{1}{\mu} 10^{(SL_E - 170.7)/10} \text{ J} \tag{7}$$

With  $SL_E = 186.0 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$ ; putting  $\mu = 0.03$  (a realistic value; factor 2 higher than available measurements = 1-2%); [de Jong & Ainslie 2008 (1%); Zampolli *et al.*, 2013 (2%)]. A threshold of 1.13 kJ follows. This is much lower than typical values used for offshore construction (hundreds of kilojoules). It is therefore proposed to include all impact pile driving in the Register.

2.7.1 Conclusions

The threshold for a non-pulse (sonar etc) is 176 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$ . The thresholds for pulses are listed in Table 4.

	Impact pile driving	Seismic survey (airgun array)	Explosions
<b>SL<sub>E</sub> threshold for Register</b>	186 dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$	186 dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$	210 dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$
<b>Proxy</b>	Hammer energy $E_{hammer}$	Zero to peak source strength $SL_{zp}$	TNT charge mass $m_{TNTeq}$
<b>Derived proxy threshold for Register</b>	1.1 kJ	207 dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa m}$	8 g

Table 4: Derived proxies for multiple pulses and explosions

In table 4 we see how the proposed thresholds depend on the choice made for the ranges where response is relevant (the range  $R_{ps}$ ). Adopting the value  $R_{ps} = 1000 \text{ m}$  we obtain the following criteria for inclusion in the Register of low and mid-frequency sources:

- Air gun:  $SL_{zp} > 209 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$
- Low-mid frequency sonar:  $SL > 176 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$
- Low-mid frequency acoustic deterrent:  $SL > 176 \text{ dB re } 1 \mu\text{Pa m}$
- Explosions:  $m_{TNTeq} > 8 \text{ g}$

The minimum hammer energy needed is very low (compared to the values of this parameter encountered in practice) and a minimum threshold would not be relevant. All licensed pile driving activity associated with offshore construction would be included in the Register.

The above conclusions (for impact pile drivers) do not depend on the precise choice of  $R_{ps}$ . They would follow also from a choice of 100 m or 3000 m for this range.

### 2.8.1 Further improvements: further details of data collection

The thresholds that were derived will ensure that all sources that have a potential for significant effect will be included in the register. However, these relatively low thresholds imply that sources will be registered that actually will have a relatively low impact (e.g. sonars whose source level is less than 200 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$ ), while there are much stronger sources that may have a much greater impact (e.g. sonar sources that have a source level around 230 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$ ). TSG Noise noted that there is a need for more detail in the register than only the pulse-day level suggested by TG11. For example not only the day, but also the number of noise-producing events, and the source level of each might be recorded; if available to be used at a later stage. Further information would be helpful in both of the roles of the register: recording what has happened and acting as a potential planning tool for future activities.

It is proposed that the following additional information be gathered in the register, which will further enable MS to assess the magnitude of impact of sounds sources:

#### SOURCE PROPERTIES

1. Source level or proxy;
2. Source spectra;
3. Duty cycle;
4. Directivity;
5. Duration of transmissions;
6. Platform speed

Of this list, an estimate of the first five would be needed to calculate the free-field energy, a measure of environmental cost proposed by [Ainslie & Dekeling, 2011]). Platform speed also determines size of impacted area so collecting this data may be useful.

In order to assess which sources, of those included in the Register, contribute to Indicator 11.1.1, it is necessary to determine whether they have significant impact. To achieve this, TSG Noise considers it necessary that at least the source level (or proxy) and the number of times a source is used per day are registered. Since it is possible that many operators (navies using sonar, oil and gas companies using airguns) will not cooperate if detailed information of source properties is requested, (e.g. sonar source level is often considered classified), and it is proposed that not the specific level is registered but that operators will have the option to report source level as follows:

#### **Sonars or acoustic deterrents (source level):**

- Very low: 176-200 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$
- Low: 200-210 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$
- Medium: 210-220 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$
- High: above 220 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$

#### **Generic explicitly impulsive source (energy source level):**

- Very low: 186-210 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$
- Low: 210-220 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$
- Medium: 220-230 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$
- High: above 230 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2 \text{ m}^2 \text{ s}$

#### **Airgun arrays (zero to peak source level):**

- Very low: 209-233 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa m}$

- Low: 233-243 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa m
- Medium: 243-253 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa m
- High: above 253 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa m

**Explosions (equivalent TNT charge mass)**

- Very low: 8 g to 210 g
- Low: 210 g to 2.1 kg
- medium: 2.1-21 kg
- high: 21-210 kg
- Very high: above 210 kg

**Impact pile driver (hammer energy)**

- Very low: less than 280 kJ
- Low: 280 kJ-2.8 MJ
- Medium: 2.8-28 MJ
- High: above 28 MJ

## 1.1 Proposal for establishing national and a common Regional Sea noise registry

(Authors: M.L Tasker & R.P.A. Dekeling)

The objective of the noise register is to develop a large scale picture of the occurrence of loud impulsive sounds in national and regional seas, information that is not available in any coherent way this moment. It is plainly of benefit that national work be compatible across marine boundaries. This is the main underlying reason for the establishment of TSG-Noise. All European MS were asked to supply information on loud impulsive underwater sounds to TSG-noise in order that the group could learn from existing efforts and to determine what information was readily available for use. Information was forthcoming from the UK, the Republic of Ireland and The Netherlands. The following proposal is therefore based on that somewhat limited dataset. It should be noted that translation issues surrounding the Commission Decision led to some Member States not following the Decision in the way foreseen and therefore not being able to follow TSG-noise's request.

The information provided by the three Member States was basically that was available due to the need to regulate activities under European (primarily the EIA Directive) or national legislation. TSG-noise notes this pragmatism and considers that such information will cover a very high percentage of all relevant impulsive sound occurring in Europe's seas. Adding other noise sources to registers may not have enough added values in relation to the added cost.

The following notes are based on analysis of data on seismic sources in UK waters. In this case, three main types of information are available:

- a) the forms used to notify authorities of the intention to carry out a seismic survey
- b) the "close-out" reports made by operators after the seismic survey
- c) the reports made by observers placed on board all seismic vessels in UK waters under the consent conditions for those surveys.

Type a) differs from types b) and c) because these forms are completed before the survey and no plans are ever followed exactly – weather, ship availability and equipment issues are all factors that affect actual practice. Both type a) "prior to activity" and types b) / c) "after activity" are required; the former is needed should management of activity be required, while the latter gives a truer picture of what happened. This is an important principle in the establishment of a noise register.

In the UK at present the close-out reports are not detailed enough (e.g. pulse-block-days are difficult to derive from them), but this is being addressed. Full reports from observers are the most reliable source, but manually plotting the effort data from these reports is currently the only way to determine pulse-days and this is very labour intensive. These reports may also be limited to a pre-firing check or daylight hours, which means a lot of location data on when the guns were actually firing may be missing.

For seismic activities it may be simpler (and sufficient for some purposes) to provide a monthly overview of noise per block, but for other activities (e.g. piling for wind farms) it may be easier to collect data on actual positions instead of block data. Naval operators will want to report in operating areas/exercise areas that are of different size and structure than the seismic blocks. Exercising naval units normally use dedicated areas for specific training, e.g. see the map shown here, e.g. 'Navy Area Charlie' is the area where helicopter sonar training can be executed. 'Charlie', or e.g. 'Charlie South' could be used for reporting.

### **Text box 1: Variable scale operating areas**

- In the **UK**, normally offshore leases are granted in 10X12 minute blocks, this may be different per MS; in the **Netherlands** no fixed block size is used.(Elsewhere, e.g. in the USA, offshore leases are granted in 3-mile squares, or smaller sizes when the block is truncated by the edge of the lease-able zone).
- Various military exercise areas and testing range exist but these typically are not of standard size (although local subdivision may be).



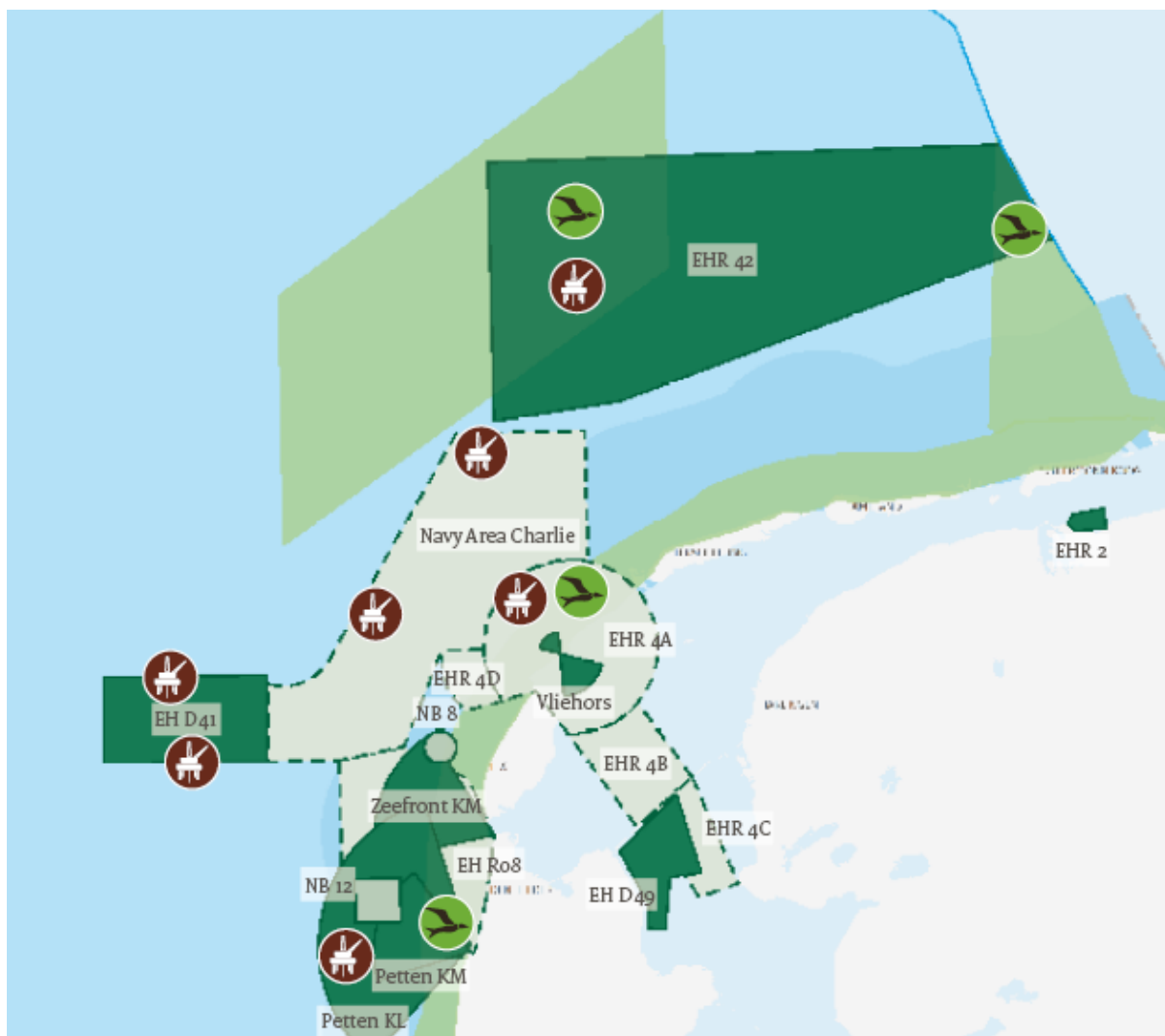


Figure 6: Map of military operating areas in the Netherlands part of the North Sea.

#### Collation of data

Member States should attempt to ensure that as much relevant data as possible are collated, whilst trying to prevent any duplication of data. Duplication occurs mostly in “after activity” data as there may be multiple sources of data. Duplication of data would also need to be considered at boundary areas (e.g. where survey regularly crosses between UK and Norwegian waters) if data from different member states is collated at a later stage.

Standardised filenames, possibly using the consent (legal) reference in the filename help considerably in sorting information. Where this is not the case (and also to reduce the length of filenames) there should be a set protocol for renaming and saving files so that they are easy to locate and check with consent data. Data files should be checked for quality assurance as soon as possible after they are received. The minimum check would be:

- 1) that required files are included in an appropriate format (i.e. JNCC files sent as excel spread sheet, not a PDF file).
- 2) that consent number and dates agree within files (check each sheet within the excel file) and between the written report and excel spread sheet.
- 3) That the details of the survey (e.g. location, dates, size of airguns etc) match those with the consent number from licensing authorities (i.e. the correct consent number has been attached to the report/spread sheets).

In order to ascertain if all data/surveys are being added to the Register, it is important to keep track of all three types of data and cross-check in order to chase up on missing data and know when surveys get cancelled or extended.

Many errors occur within the submitted reports – obvious errors (e.g. wrong year, location errors where minutes have changed from 0.99 to 0.01 but degrees have stayed the same etc) can be corrected but it is not always possible to determine what the correct value should be. This highlights the importance of checking files soon after they are received so that errors can be rectified quickly.

### **Information to be included in the register**

For the future register, the following data should be collected:

#### **Source properties**

- Source level or proxy
- Source spectra
- Duty cycle
- Directivity
- Duration of transmissions
- Platform speed

### **Issues for a common register between Member States**

Where would we store a common register, what data do we store, and who would be responsible for it (i.e. maintenance, back-up, etc)? How will we allow access to data for adding information or for viewing it?

All contributors to a common register would need to use the same format. Could this be achieved through use of a template? This includes things like formatting of cells within the dataset (e.g. using the same date format throughout), using the same colours throughout to represent the same levels of noise, as well as agreeing methods used to calculate 'pulse days'. What do we do with data that doesn't follow the agreed format? Do we assign a database manager who checks all incoming data for compatibility?

Maps used and any data plotted needs to have the same projection for lat/long or have map layers transformed to the same projection (Most JNCC base maps use WGS84, but the licence blocks/grids are in GCS European 1950). There is a 125-250 m discrepancy in some areas between the licence blocks/grid layer and the Quadrant layer (which is WGS84).

## 1.2 Noise maps for shipping and explosions in the Dutch North Sea

(Authors: M.A. Ainslie & O. Sertlek)

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this section is to illustrate the potential for noise mapping. This purpose is met by providing examples of noise maps for two very different kinds of anthropogenic sound source: shipping and explosions. Maps for both types of source are provided and conclusions are listed.

### 2.9.1 Introduction

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive defines Good Environmental Status (partly) in terms of Indicator 11.2.1. This Indicator (henceforth “Indicator 2”) requires Member States to monitor annually averaged noise in third octave bands centred at 63 Hz and 125 Hz. The purpose of this section is to present annually averaged noise maps in one of these frequency bands for selected anthropogenic noise sources for the Dutch Exclusive Economic Zone in the North Sea (hereafter referred to as the “Dutch North Sea”). See Figure 7 (below).

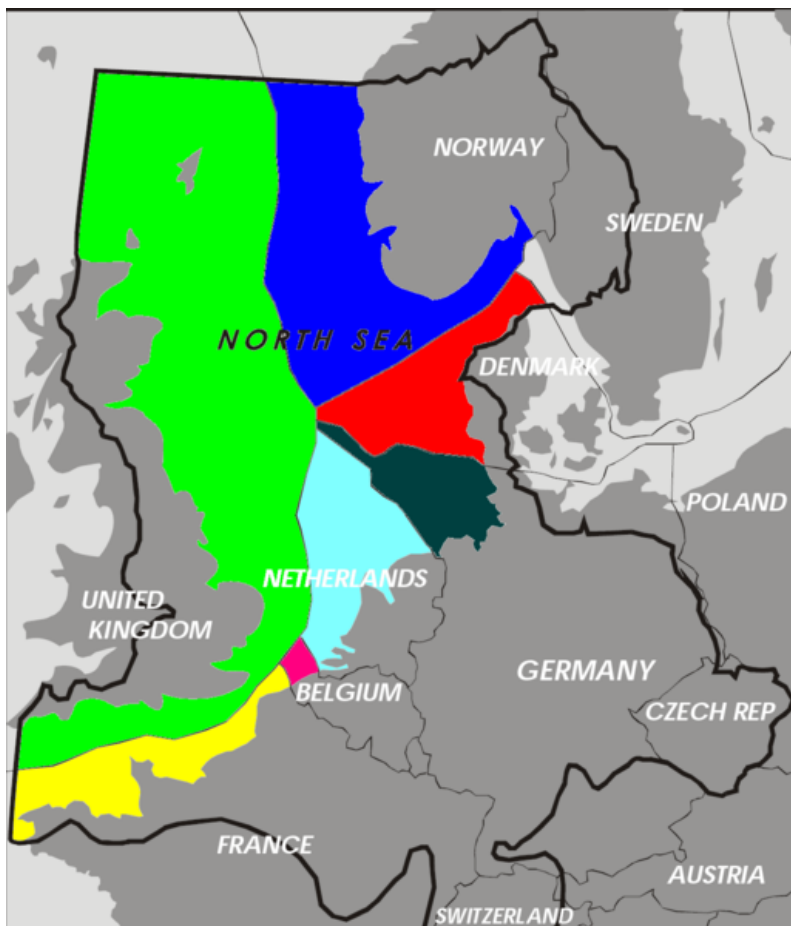


Figure 7: North Sea Exclusive Economic Zones. The region covered by this memo is the cyan region marked “NETHERLANDS”.

## 2.10.1 Sources considered

### Anthropogenic sources

The purpose of Indicator 2 is to monitor underwater sound in a frequency band representative of shipping noise (decidecades<sup>10</sup> centred at 63 Hz, 125 Hz). This memo focuses on 125 Hz. In the North Sea, results for 63 Hz are expected to be similar.

Ainslie *et al.* [2009] identifies four main sources of low frequency underwater sound, all of which can be expected to contribute to Indicator 2 in the North Sea: air guns (seismic surveys), shipping, explosions (detonation of unexploded WW2 ordnance) and impact pile driving (mainly associated with wind farm construction). According to Ainslie *et al.* [2009]:

- Seismic surveys carried out in the Dutch North Sea in 2007 involved 3D surveys covering a total area of 1400 km<sup>2</sup> and 2D surveys covering a distance of 150 km;<sup>11</sup> the estimated zero to peak source level of a typical air gun array used in these surveys is 255 dB re 1 µPa m.
- “the average number of ships per year in the Netherlands Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the years 1999 to 2001 was 336.”<sup>12</sup>
- The number of controlled detonations that took place in the Dutch North Sea in 2008 was 136, with an average TNT charge weight per detonation of 78 kg.
- Assuming a wind turbine capacity of 2 MW per turbine, wind farm construction in the Dutch North Sea would result in the installation of 2904 new turbines by 2020 (264 per year on average from 2009 to 2020).

Based on these data, the four activities mentioned were estimated by [Ainslie *et al.*, 2009 to contribute 8000 kJ, 3000 kJ, 700 kJ and 500 kJ, respectively, to the annually averaged free-field sound energy [Ainslie & Dekeling 2011] in the Dutch North Sea. These are the only activities whose total predicted free-field energy contributions in the Dutch North Sea exceed 10 kJ.<sup>13</sup> They are given special attention for the present work because the authors consider them the main anthropogenic contributors to low frequency underwater sound.

This memo concentrates on shipping and explosions (see table 5). Source distributions are shown for shipping in Figure 8 (average distribution for the year 2007) and for explosions in Figure 9 (averaged over the period 2010-2011).

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<sup>10</sup> The term “third octave band” is interpreted as one tenth of a decade (a decidecade).

<sup>11</sup> source: *Jaarverslag Staatstoezicht op de Mijnen 2007*

<sup>12</sup> this is an error; it should read “number of ships ... was 336 in the Netherlands [EEZ]” and not “number of ships per year ... was 336 in the Netherlands [EEZ]”

<sup>13</sup> In fifth place, at 2 kJ, was expected future sonar use, two orders of magnitude smaller than the fourth place (wind farm construction).

Type of source	Source distribution from	Start date	End date	Duration	Source level	Source depth
shipping	AIS	Jan 2007	Dec 2007	1 year	[Fout! erwijzingsbron niet gevonden.]	4 m
explosions	RNLN	Jan 2010	Dec 2011	2 years	[Fout! erwijzingsbron niet gevonden.]	equal to water depth

Table 5: Overview of data used for calculation of noise maps for shipping and explosions.

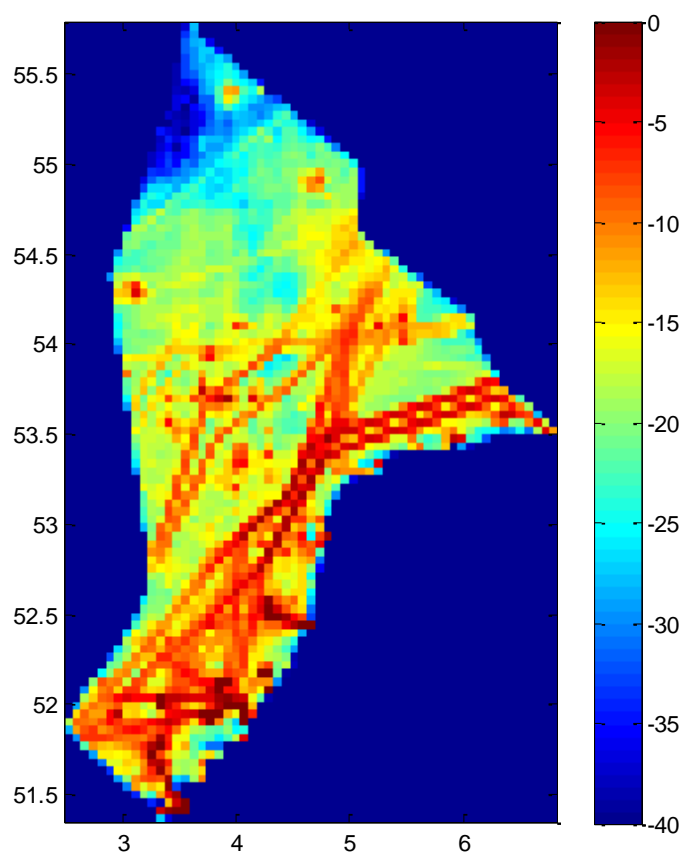


Figure 8: Distribution of shipping density  $10\log_{10}(25 N/\text{km}^2)$  where  $N$  is the average areic shipping density in 2007 (data obtained from IMARES).

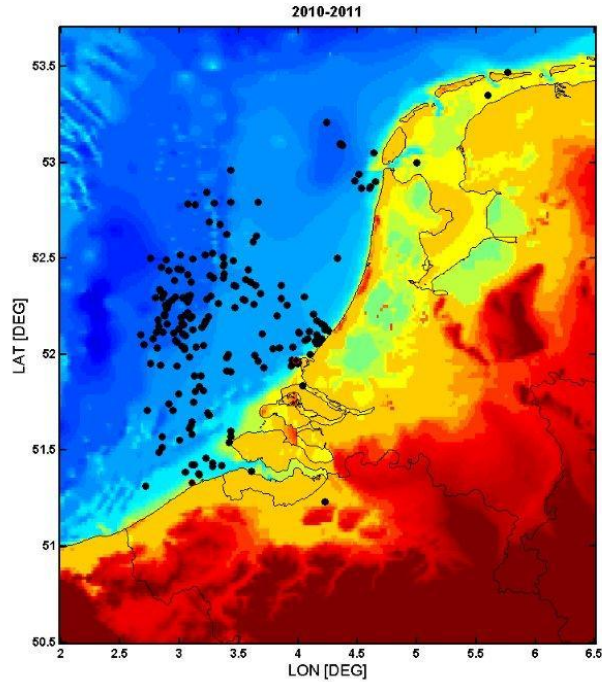


Figure 9: Distribution of explosions in 2010 and 2011 (data from RNLN).

### Natural sources

Although noise maps for natural sources are not included here, it is useful to consider the range of likely levels of natural noise, as this helps in the interpretation of the maps of anthropogenic sound. For wind speed see Figure 10.

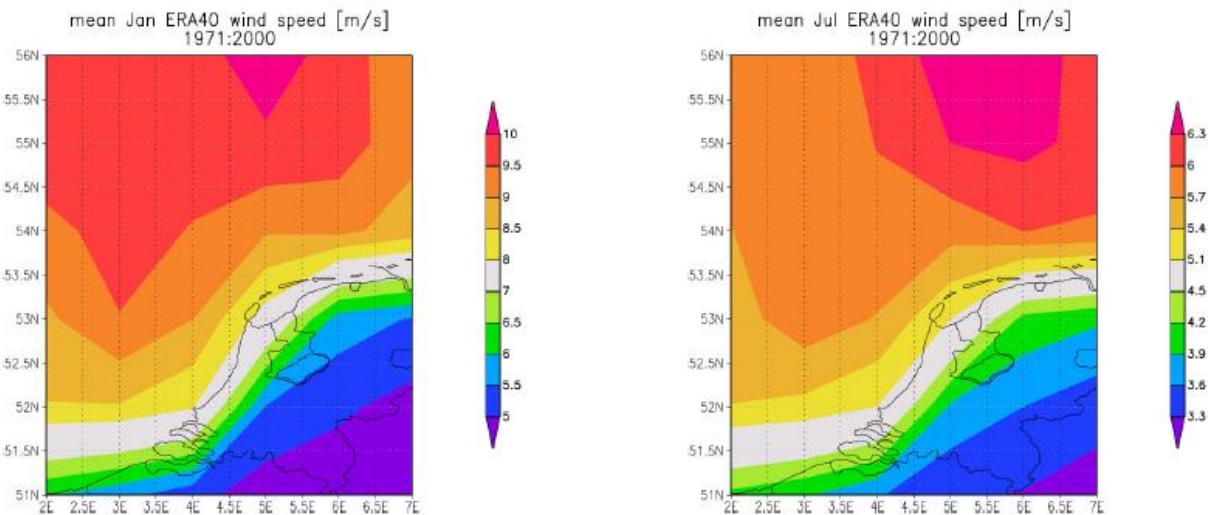


Figure 10: Map of mean wind speed in January (left) and July (right). Figure from Ainslie et al. [2009].

For the range of wind speed 5 m/s to 10 m/s, the areic spectral density dipole source level at 125 Hz is in the range 55 dB to 62 dB re 1  $\mu\text{Pa}^2/\text{Hz}$  (Figure 10). The noise level in deep water can be estimated

by adding 5 dB to this value [Ainslie 2010], giving a wind noise spectral density level of 60 dB to 67 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2/\text{Hz}$ , corresponding to sound pressure level (SPL) between 75 dB and 82 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  in the decade centred at this frequency. In shallow water, additional contributions can be expected from seabed reflections, with resulting noise levels in coastal water “5 to 10 dB higher than in deep water far from shore at frequencies greater than about 500 Hz” [Urick, p. 213]. For example, a difference of 7 dB would result in a range of 82 dB to 89 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  in shallow water. This seems consistent with the predicted maxima of 91 dB and 96 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  (for July and January, respectively) for the frequency band 10 Hz to 1 kHz, from [Ainslie *et al.*, 2009].

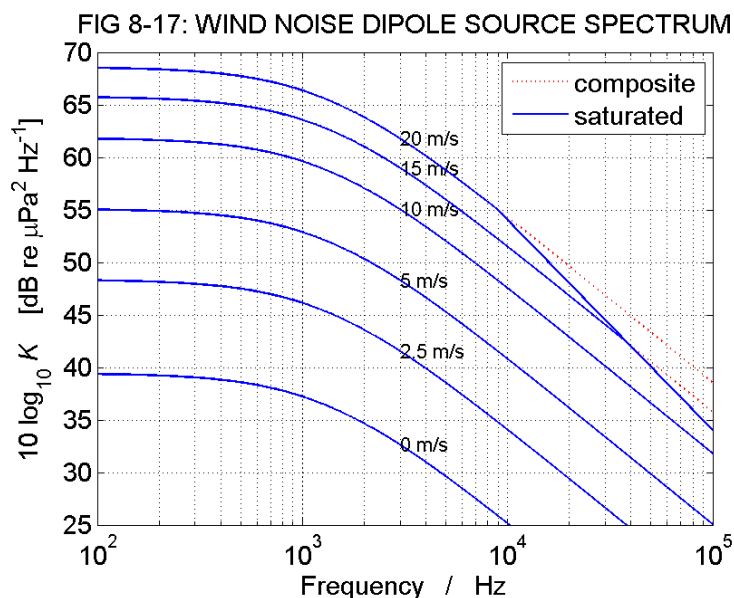


Figure 11: Areic spectral density dipole source level due to wind (© Springer).

### 2.11.1 Noise maps

Two noise maps are presented in this section, one for shipping and one for explosions. Both are for annually averaged squared pressure in the decade centred at 125 Hz, expressed as a level in decibels and for a receiver placed at depth 1 m from the sea surface.

Input parameters used for both maps are:

Wind speed = 0

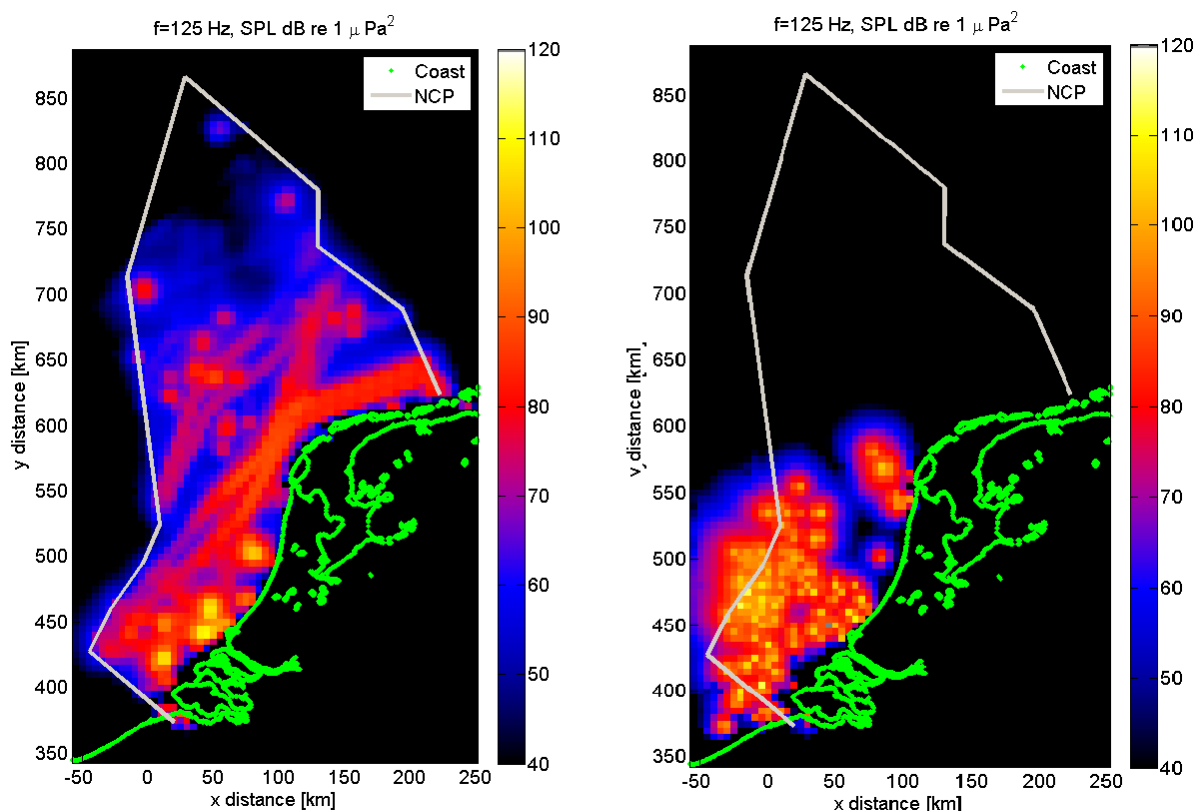
Sediment = medium sand [Ainslie 2010]

Bathymetry = ETOPO1 (interpolated with 5 km resolution)

Sound speed profile = isovelocity

#### Shipping

The left graph of Figure 12 shows predicted sound pressure level in the 125 Hz band associated with the shipping distribution of Figure 8. According to this distribution, the average number of ships in the Dutch North Sea in 2007 was 259, of which 248 are taken into account in the present calculations. The shipping distribution and therefore the resulting noise map are averaged over one year (January to December 2007). Shipping noise so calculated is between 50 dB and 100 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  on most of the Dutch North Sea. The bright spots near the coastline centred at approximately 50 km E, 450 km N are probably artefacts and should be disregarded.



**Figure 12: Annually averaged noise predictions for the Dutch North Sea: SPL in the decidecade centred at 125 Hz.** Left: shipping noise for 2007; right: noise from explosions, averaged over two years (2010 and 2011). Receiver depth is 1 m. (provided by Özkan Sertlek/TNO).

### Explosions

Approximately 230 underwater explosions took place in the Dutch North Sea in the period 1 Jan 2010 to 31 Dec 2011 (see Figure 9).

Explosions are concentrated in the southwest corner of the Dutch North Sea, where the predicted annual average contribution from explosions to the 125 Hz band is mostly between 70 dB and 110 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa, compared to mostly 60 to 90 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa from shipping in the same frequency band. If the predicted contribution at a given location is dominated by a single detonation, a one second average at that location will be 75 dB higher than this during the explosion (i.e., up to ca. 185 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa in the same frequency band). The maximum SPL will depend on both the bandwidth and duration of the received pulse. A system designed to record such events in combination with the background noise would require a dynamic range of at least 110 dB. Conversely, a system designed to omit these high amplitude events would neglect the single largest contribution to Indicator 2 in the south-western part of the Dutch North Sea. This shows the need to store the complete distribution for the purpose of analysis.

#### 2.12.1 Conclusions and way ahead

Noise maps similar to those presented can give a clear indication of the main anthropogenic sources that contribute to sound at each location. The two chosen activities take place mainly in the south and southwest of the Dutch North Sea, close to the coastline. Such maps can be used to identify:

- locations for which the soundscape is dominated by a single (and identifiable) anthropogenic source.
- locations at which the soundscape is dominated by multiple (identifiable) anthropogenic sources.



- locations where soundscape is dominated by natural sounds.

Applications include:

- choice of suitable locations for monitoring by measurement.
- choice of suitable locations for monitoring by modelling.
- design of suitable measurement and data acquisition equipment (e.g., the need for high dynamic range in areas with a high likelihood of explosions).

Important sound producing anthropogenic activities sources not included in the present maps are seismic surveys and offshore construction (mainly of wind farms).

One could use similar maps to calculate statistics of the spatial distribution, such as:

- arithmetic mean of squared sound pressure.
- a measure of spatial variability.
- the annually averaged total sound energy in the Dutch North Sea. By taking account of the propagation conditions, doing so would provide a ranking of sound sources in the Dutch North Sea of higher fidelity than that obtained by Ainslie *et al.* [2009] using the concept of free field energy [Ainslie & Dekeling, 2011]

## 1.3 Noise modelling and mapping in Irish waters

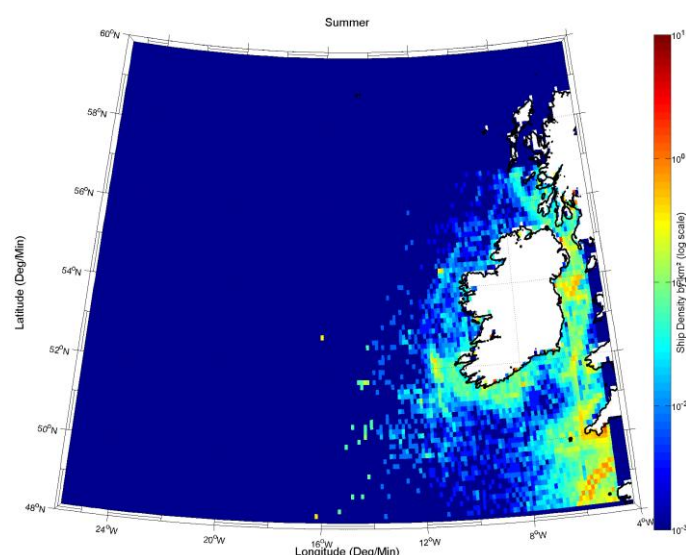
(Author: T. Folegot)

### Summary

The research program STRIVE Noise, conducted by Quiet-Oceans (France) and CMRC (Ireland) and funded by the Irish EPA aims to provide a preliminary seasonal ambient noise atlas based on available environmental and anthropogenic data. Among this atlas of noise, specific sound maps associated with shipping has been produced based on an annual collection of Automated Identification System data (AIS).

### 2.13.1 Shipping activities in Irish waters

The AIS network was able to report a semi-coastal description of vessel positions under the current which requires AIS to be fitted aboard all ships of gross tonnage exceeding 300 engaged on international voyages, cargo ships of gross tonnage exceeding 500 not engaged on international voyages and all passenger ships irrespective of size. The AIS based data set is therefore not exhaustive, but gives a reasonable description of large shipping. A seasonal density map has been derived from the annual AIS dataset, and Figure 13 is an illustration of the July-September 2012 period.



**Figure 13: Ship density map representative to the period July-September 2012, and based on the coastal AIS network. The colour scale unit is the average number of vessel present per km<sup>2</sup> and is expressed in a logarithmic scale.**

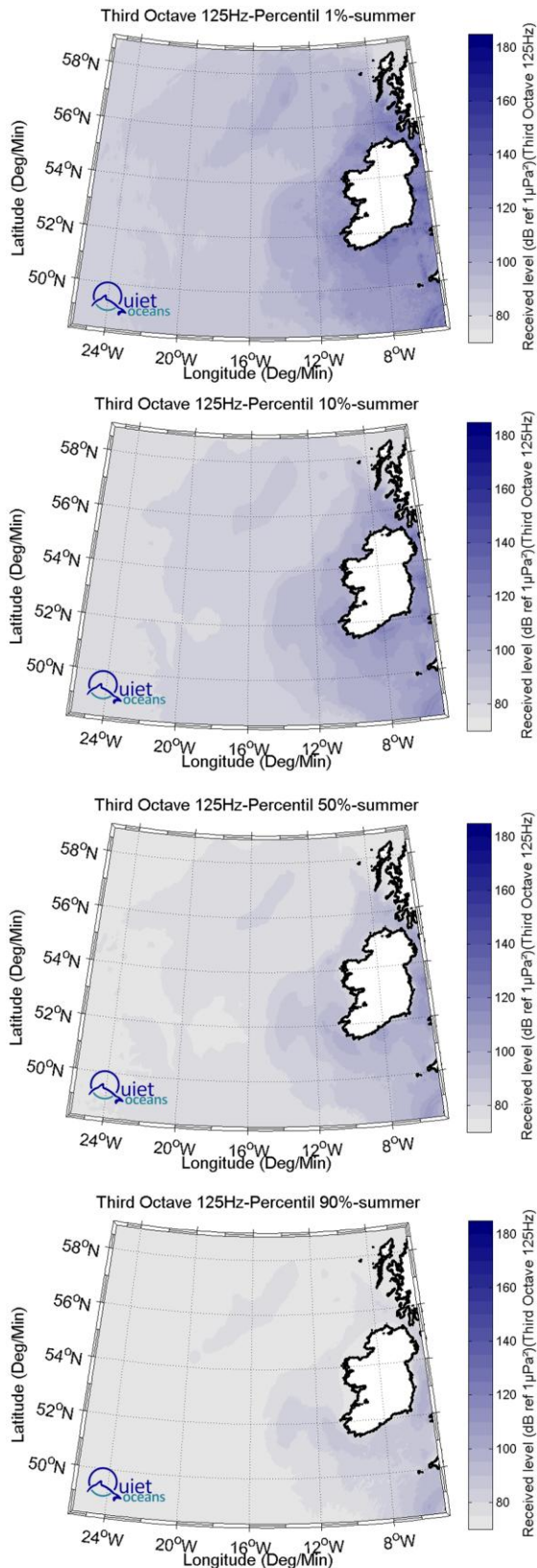
### 2.14.1 Example of noise mapping

The stochastic nature of noise is related to the fact that the sources of anthropogenic noise and, to a lesser extent, environmental conditions, are difficult to predict or to anticipate. Indeed, it is obviously difficult to predict number, type and position of ships in the area. Environmental uncertainty, such as weak or sparse data describing bottom properties, or variability such as fluctuating sea-state also usually leads to difficulties when it comes to characterize the anthropogenic noise at the scale of a basin and a season.

To overcome these two difficulties, an approach based on Monte-Carlo has been proposed in order to build a statistical map of the anthropogenic noise, and to provide to the stakeholders a representative description of the seasonal and spatial variability at the scale of an oceanographic basin. The Monte-Carlo approach applied in this project consists of a number of releases of anthropogenic situations that are consistent with the statistical description given by the AIS data.

Based on the statistical environmental description of the Irish EEZ (oceanography, bathymetry, bottom properties, etc.), Quonops, Quiet-Oceans' ocean noise prediction system was able to calculate the noise field associated with each anthropogenic situations. From this set of "instantaneous" three-dimensional sound predictions, the noise statistics representative of the seasonal environment and the shipping variability has been derived in the form of percentiles. A percentile is describing, for each latitude and longitude of the map, the proportion of time and depth where the ambient noise is larger than a given value, and these are expressed according to the International Standard [ISO 2003] as "N% exceedance levels". The 50% exceedance level is exactly the definition of the median.

The resulting noise maps for the Irish EEZ and representative of the summer are represented in Figure 8 for 1% (rare occurrence), 10% (significant occurrence), 50% (median occurrence) and 90% (most occurrences) exceedance levels. The 1% exceedance level represents the highest noise levels that are expected, whereas the 90% exceedance level is close to the distribution of the lowest level of anthropogenic noise. It is interesting to note that the shipping route in the north-west corner of France contributes more to underwater sound levels than the routes that go to some harbours in the south coast of Ireland and the multiple routes in the Irish channel. It is also interesting to note the resurgence zone of ambient noise in the shallow waters in the north-west of Irish EEZ. Although this has to be confirmed by in-situ measurement, it could be explained by propagation effects linked to the bathymetric and oceanographic features of the area.



**Figure 14: 125 Hz third-octave noise maps representative to shipping noise in summer for 1% (rare occurrence), 10% (significant occurrence), 50% (median occurrence) and 90% (most occurrences) exceedance levels. The 1% exceedance level represents the highest noise.**

## 1.4 BIAS - Baltic Sea Information on the Acoustic Soundscape

*(Authors: P. Sigray & M. Andersson)*

The Baltic Sea is a semi-enclosed ocean with nine states bordering the sea. It consists of eight sub-catchment areas (basins) and a numerous of harbours. The density of ships is one of the highest in Europe. It is estimated that about 2000 sizeable ships are at sea at any time. Further, several large wind farms are planned to be erected adding noise to the marine environment. Undoubtedly, due to the unbound character of noise it has to be dealt with and preferable on a regional scale.

In September 2012 the EU supported BIAS project was started (LIFE+ programme). The project has three main objectives. The first is to establish a regional implementation of Descriptor 11, which includes development of user-friendly tools for management of the Descriptor and to obtain sound levels. The second objective is to establish regional standards and methodologies that will allow for cross-border handling of data and results, which is necessary for an efficient joint management. The third objective is to model the soundscape and thereby expand the measurements to the entire Baltic Sea. Not at least, a regional handling will decrease the over-all costs to individual Member States.

The BIAS project is aimed at solving the major challenges when implementing Descriptor 11 in the Baltic Sea. One year of measurements will be performed covering the whole Baltic Sea. In total 40 sensors will be deployed. The measurements will be performed by adhering to the standards that will be established in the project. Likewise will the data be analysed using standardized signal processing routines. Results will be subjected to a quality control and finally stored in a common data-sharing platform.

The project has faced many of the challenges that arise when the Descriptor is to be transformed into daily practice. Consequently the BIAS project has gained valuable experience that can be shared with all Member States. For more details visit BIAS website where contact information can be found ([www.bias-project.eu](http://www.bias-project.eu)).

## 1.5 Noise modelling and mapping in German waters

(Author: S. Werner)

### 2.15.1 Objective

Acoustic mapping of noise levels arising from offshore human activities over scales relevant to long-term, regional-scale decision making would also allow a holistic assessment for D 11 MSFD.

A German research & development project (at the Federal Environment Agency (UBA)) is recently developing a mapping software as a standalone executable – experiences from this project could be used as a basis together with experiences from other mapping efforts such as done and published by TNO. In the following a short overview is given about the working packages carried out within this project.

### 2.16.1 Measurement standards, sound profiles, recordings of background noise

Sources and their signatures, align with respective measurement standards, are collected with the aim of producing a catalogue of relevant source signatures of those acoustic sources that are supposed to be incorporated in the mapping. Those include shipping, pile driving and seismic activities including predictions for their typical propagation loss. Information is collected on distribution, density and acoustic characteristics of human activities in European waters for multiple depths and frequencies (as part of a sound register). In addition features which lead to substantial variation of propagation loss are identified.

### 2.17.1 Definition of area-specific propagation models

Existing validated propagation models for the different marine regions as well as information on validated environmental data for European Seas (bathymetry, constitution of sediment, in situ-measurements of hydro-acoustic parameters etc.) are collected and factored for the definition of area-specific propagation models.

### 2.18.1 Collection of assessment approaches for impacts

First definitions of species-specific sound levels for judging the different categories of impacts (injury, disturbance) are discussed and will be incorporated in order to illustrate impact zones. Further thoughts will be given into habitat modelling and density and distribution mapping for species in order to identify areas which are of special biological importance.

### 2.19.1 Description of software requirements to model the underwater sound field in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of MS and image species-related impacts on organisms

Following software requirements were given beforehand:

- 50 Hz to 20 kHz, 1/3 octave, 500 m resolution
- 3-D, sound speed profile and bottom variability
- SEL for impulse, SPL for continuous noise, several propagation models optional
- Digital bathymetrics
- List of target species, their audiograms (hearing threshold as a function of frequency), and regulator thresholds (e.g. for behavioral disturbance, temporary threshold shift)
- Evaluation against receiving properties of animals, plots of threshold exceeding
- Etc.

- ➔ Supported by long time (abt. 3 month) monitoring in dedicated area
- ➔ With input from other projects validation of propagation loss
- ➔ Determination of noise variability
- ➔ Proposal of recorder placement (5 in North Sea, 3 in Baltic Sea) preferably at existing stations

### **2.20.1 Status of work**

A first version of the software will be available in the second quarter of 2013 to be further discussed with experts and political decision-maker to meet their requirement and to ensure wide usage of the software once available for regular usage.

## 1.6 European experience with the use of mapping

(Author: Michael Dittrich)

The use of mapping has some history and in the process of implementing the MSFD we should make use of earlier European experience. Noise monitoring in air has been carried out for decades and has resulted in a body of work on noise maps. The relevant EU regulation is described in Part II, *Text Box 1*, and provides some useful background within Europe that can assist in implementing the MSFD.

European Directive 2002/49/EC [2002/49/EC], also known as the Environmental Noise Directive (END), regulates the assessment and management of environmental noise from large infrastructures including major agglomerations (>250 000 inhabitants), roads (> 6 million vehicle passages per year), railways (> 60 000 train passages per year) and major airports. The END is one of the instruments of Community policy to achieve a high level of health and environmental protection, in particular against noise. It requires these infrastructures to be assessed by producing revised noise maps every five years. In addition, action plans for noise mitigation must be compiled, aimed at reducing noise levels that exceed national limits set by individual MS. Both the noise maps and action plans are submitted to the European Commission (EC), which collects these in a database for evaluation purposes. The action plans must also be updated every five years and must take into account major changes affecting noise levels. The noise maps and action plans are publicly disseminated.

The noise indicators used for noise mapping are the day-evening-night level (Lden) and the night level (Lnight), both determined for a whole year. The noise levels may be determined by measurement or by calculation. The harmful effects of noise are determined by dose-effect relationships for annoyance and for sleep disturbance. By combining topographical data on location and numbers of inhabitants per dwelling, numbers of annoyed and sleep disturbed people can be estimated. The END does not set noise limits at the receiver locations, which is at the discretion of member states.

The END prescribes the following in its annexes:

- a. The definition of the noise indicators;
- b. The assessment methods for the indicators, both measurement and calculation;
- c. Assessment methods for harmful effects;
- d. Minimum requirements for strategic noise mapping and action plans
- e. Data to be sent to the Commission.

The values of Lden and Lnight can be determined either by computation or by measurement (at the assessment position). Measurement methods must be adapted in accordance with the principles governing long-term average measurements stated in [ISO 1996-2] and [ISO 1996-1].

Recommended assessment methods are listed for member states that have no methods or wish to change their methods. Currently, the Commission is introducing new assessment methods into legislation known as CNOSSOS-EU. The assessment methods predict average noise levels at receiver positions based on noise source data and propagation models. The source data are typically derived from average sound emission data for characteristic vehicle groups (road or rail), their average speeds and operating conditions, the infrastructure (road type or track type for railways) and the flow rate of each vehicle group. For sound propagation, the basic geometry, ground absorption, reflections and noise barriers are taken into account. For noise mapping, generally total broadband Lden levels are used. But for more accurate assessment in relation to action plans, noise levels in octave bands are used.

The END was evaluated in 2010 [Rev 2002/49/EC 2010], to review the implementation of the key provisions of the Directive, to review measures employed to manage environmental noise from key sources, and to develop an Action Plan outlining further implementation strategies and Community action on environmental noise.



## 1.7 Comparison of averaging methods for Indicator 11.2.1

(Authors: M. A. Ainslie, M. van der Schaar, M. André, S. P. Robinson & M. K. Prior<sup>14</sup>)

### Summary

purpose of sec 2.7 is to substantiate the advice of TSG Noise to MS on the choice of annual averaging method for implementation of Indicator 11.2.1. Because no suitable data are available in European waters, it was decided to compare different averaging methods on a data from the International Monitoring System of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), made available to TSG Noise via LIDO. The definition of «ambient noise» is discussed in sec 2.7.2, followed by a description of the CTBTO data set (2.7.3) and a comparison of different averages (2.7.4). The advantages and disadvantages of each averaging method are listed in sec 2.7.5 and discussed in 2.7.6. The conclusions (2.7.7) depend on one's chosen definition of «ambient noise». TSG Noise recommends (see sec 2.7.8) use of the arithmetic mean (AM).

### 2.21.1 Introduction

The MSFD defines GES (partly) in terms of Indicator 11.2.1. This Indicator (henceforth “Indicator 2”) requires a measure of annually averaged noise. The purpose of this memo is to consider pros and cons of different kinds of averaging. Indicator 2 is specified by the Commission Decision of Sep 2010 as “Trends in the ambient noise level ... (... average noise level ... over a year)”, which is interpreted by the TSG Noise report of February 2012 as: “Trends in the annual average of the squared sound pressure associated with ambient noise ... expressed as a level in decibels”.

The purpose of this memo is to reconsider this definition. It does so by comparing the annual average (arithmetic mean) of the squared sound pressure with other possible metrics. Specifically, we consider processing by which the mean square sound pressure is determined in successive samples (“snapshots”) of duration T. A distribution of snapshots with fixed T is then obtained by collecting them over one or more consecutive years. The following three averages of this distribution are considered:

- Arithmetic mean (AM - the TSG interpretation);
- Geometric mean (GM - equivalent to average in decibels);
- Median.

The possible benefits of a fourth type of average, the mode, are considered in sections 5.6.5 to 5.6.7.

The purpose of Indicator 2 is to quantify noise in a frequency range likely to be influenced by shipping. Shipping noise has both permanent and intermittent components, and an annual average will automatically include both. There might also be locations at which shipping noise is not the largest contributor to Indicator 2.

The choice of averaging method needs to be:

- I. robust to minor changes or differences in implementation;
- II. physically meaningful and representative of a large enough region to justify its use as an indicator of GES;
- III. practical (simple to implement);
- IV. compatible with comparable regulations or procedures (desirable property but not essential).

It seems likely that Indicator 2 will be monitored by different Member States (MS) with different equipment and different analysis protocols, and that the selection of equipment and protocol is unlikely to be fixed for all time. We therefore seek an average that is robust to small differences and changes in equipment and processing protocols. We used CTBTO data, which were analysed with a software package from the LIDO-project (Listening to the Deep Ocean Environment) [André *et al.*, 2011].

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<sup>14</sup> “The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission”

The remainder of this chapter concentrates mainly on requirement (I), the invariance with the choice of snapshot duration. The other two requirements are addressed in the discussion section. The LIDO data that were used for this memo had been analysed in time segments of 65.5 seconds. The minimum snapshot duration used here is therefore 65.5 seconds. Noise measurements were provided as sound pressure levels over the data segment. Longer snapshots were made by combining the SPL measurements of multiple consecutive data segments. This means that the averages other than the AM were influenced by the AM that is already part of the SPL computation. The use of a 65.5 second snapshot time in this document is not intended as a recommendation from the authors; it was chosen with a different application in mind, namely the detection of certain cetaceans. A similar analysis on the same recordings, using a smaller snapshot time (10 seconds) is provided in van der Schaar *et al.* [2013].

### 2.22.1 Definitions of “ambient noise”

Indicator 2 is defined as a trend in annually averaged ambient noise, so it is important to have definitions for the terms “trend” and “ambient noise”.

The term “ambient noise” is defined by TSG [Van der Graaf *et al.*, 2012, Annex 3 (Glossary)] as “*For a specified signal, all sound in the absence of that signal except that resulting from the deployment, operation or recovery of the recording equipment and its associated platform.*”

This definition is accompanied by the note: “*If no signal is specified, all sound except that resulting from the deployment, operation or recovery of the recording equipment and its associated platform.*”

See part II chapter 2 where the definition of [ambient noise] is explained.”

The opening paragraph of Van der Graaf *et al.* [2012] Sec. 4.1 reads:

*“Ambient noise is commonly defined as background noise without distinguishable sources (see: [Wenz, 1962, Urlick, 1984, Dahl et al., 2007, Cato, 2008]). However, this poses the problem how to deal with identifiable sources that contribute to the local soundscape and that add to pressures. TSGN therefore discussed a more operational definition of sound relevant to indicator 11.2.1 that is more in line with the term ‘soundscape’ (see [IQOE] Science Plan). Following this line of thinking sounds from identifiable sources should be included in recording and analysis in addition to non-identifiable sources. Self-noise, including platform noise and non-acoustic contributions such as electrical self-noise, flow noise and cable strum may contribute to the recorded signals, but these should be minimized during measurement and should not be considered in the analysis of trends.”*

With this definition, “ambient noise” is all sound except self-noise, including infrequent transients, consistent with the definition ANSI 1994; (‘all sound’ includes both natural and anthropogenic sounds).

## TREND

TSG Noise defines “trend”, as that by Van der Graaf *et al.* [2012]:

*“general direction in which something is developing or changing. In the context of monitoring, ‘trend’ refers to year-to-year (or longer) changes in a specific quantity”*

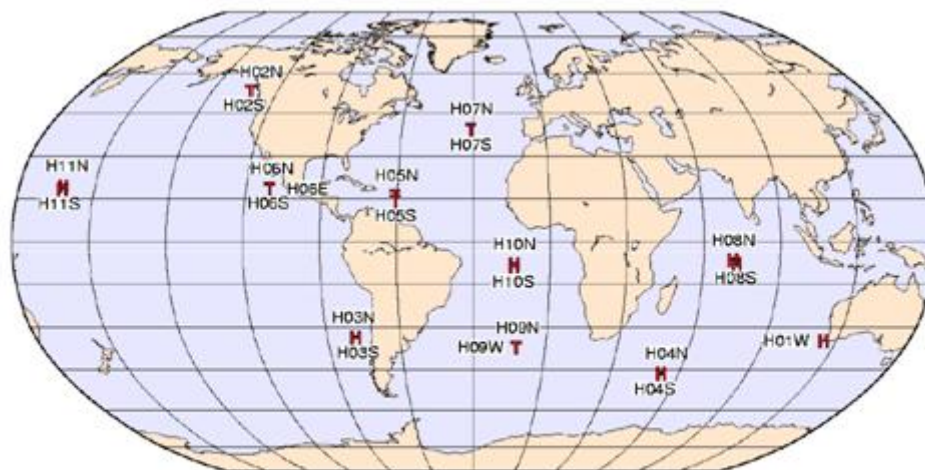
### 2.23.1 CTBTO data set

Data are available from CTBTO over several years (see Figure 15 for the location of the hydrophone stations and Table 6 for start and end date of data used from each station). One channel of each station was analysed for a period of at least three years. The analysis was done in data segments<sup>15</sup> of

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<sup>15</sup> A single CTBTO data segment contains 16384 samples at a sampling rate of 250 Hz.

duration ~65.5 seconds. For each segment the mean square pressure was computed in the third octave band centred at 63 Hz. In the following this quantity, expressed as a level in decibels, is denoted  $SPL_{63}$ . The digitisation sensitivity in the last column is defined as the ratio of the digital representation of a sound pressure sample, as recorded by CTBTO, to the acoustic pressure giving rise to that sample.



The IMS hydroacoustic network consists of 6 hydrophone triad stations and 5 land-based (so-called) T-stations

Figure 15: Location of CTBTO stations.

Platform	Hydrophone station #	Time start	Time end	# Segments (duration 65.5 s)	# Days	Digitisation sensitivity [counts per millipascal]
Cape Leeuwin	H01	Jan 2008	Jun 2011	1580682	1189	1.83918
Juan Fernández Islands	H03	Jan 2007	Feb 2010	1459911	1098	1.77996
Ascension Island	H10	Jan 2008	Jun 2011	1650629	1242	1.82815
Wake Island	H11	Jan 2008	Jun 2011	1650603	1242	1.82715

Table 6: Summary of CTBTO data set.

Measured values of  $SPL_{63}$  exceeding 180 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa were removed from the data set on the assumption that they are probable acquisition artefacts. Measurements from each station are described below.

ASCENSION ISLAND

At Ascension Island (16) the distribution of the level stayed mostly the same throughout the years (Figure 17).



Figure 16: Location of Ascension Island (hydrophone station H10).

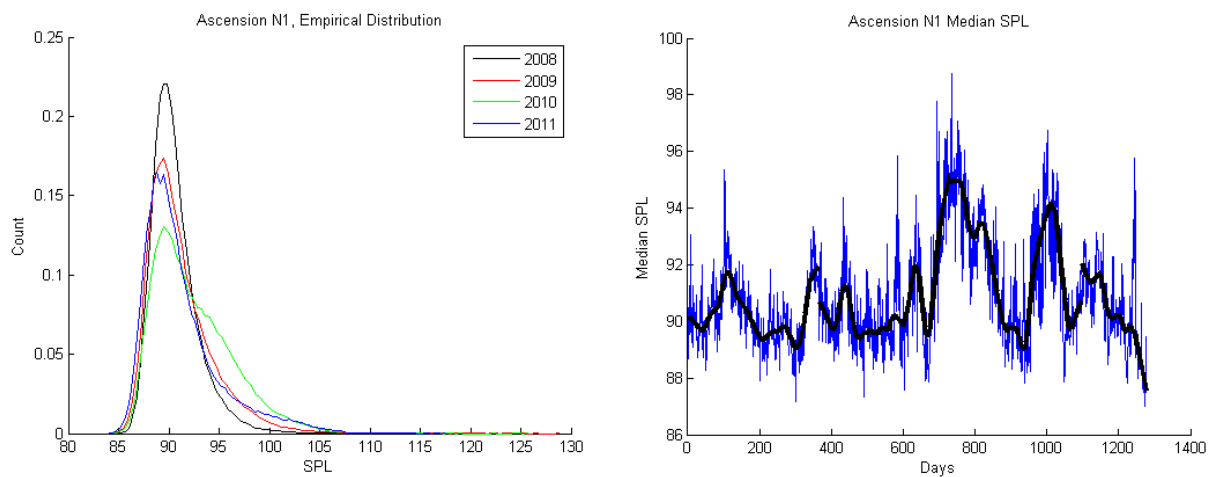


Figure 17: Left graph: Histogram of  $SPL_{63}$  distribution for Ascension Island ( $T = 65.5$  s); right graph: daily median of  $SPL_{63}$  vs time.

In 2010 data for Ascension Island, around day 750, a temporal increase in noise can be seen. The station had a characteristic noise pattern from a seismic survey (Figure 18).

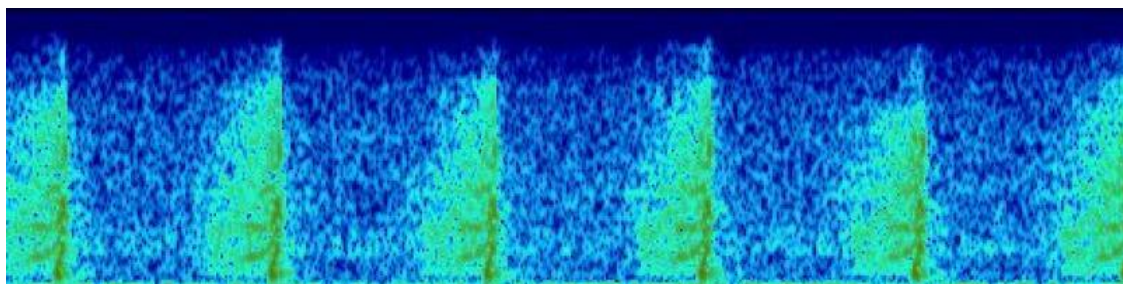


Figure 18: Spectrogram recorded on June 30 2010, from 15:39:55 to 15:41:00 (UTC) for Ascension Island; this is one sample of 65.5 s duration.

CAPE LEEUWIN

At Cape Leeuwin (Figure 19) a change in noise levels could be measured (Figure 20). But from 2011 only the first half of the year was available which seems to be the noisiest season and will offset the distribution.



Figure 19: Location of St Alouarn Islands, close to Cape Leeuwin (hydrophone station H01). Well placed for ice noise from Antarctica.

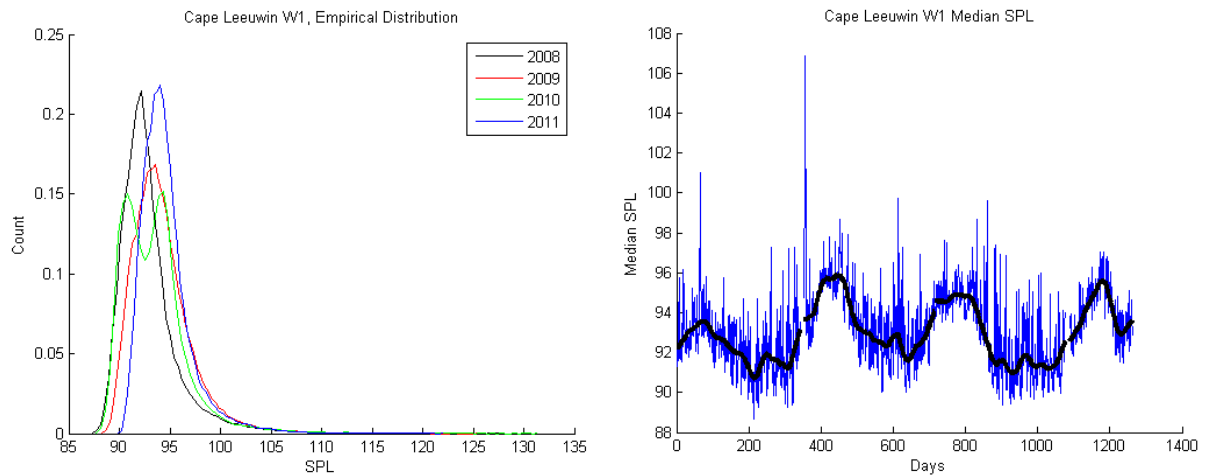


Figure 20: Left graph: Histogram of  $SPL_{63}$  distribution for Cape Leeuwin ( $T = 65.5$  s); right graph: daily median of  $SPL_{63}$  vs time.

21 shows evidence of ice noise at ca. 21:00 on 14 May 2011 (although the highest amplitude events on that day seem to be those of 14:40 and 23:05).

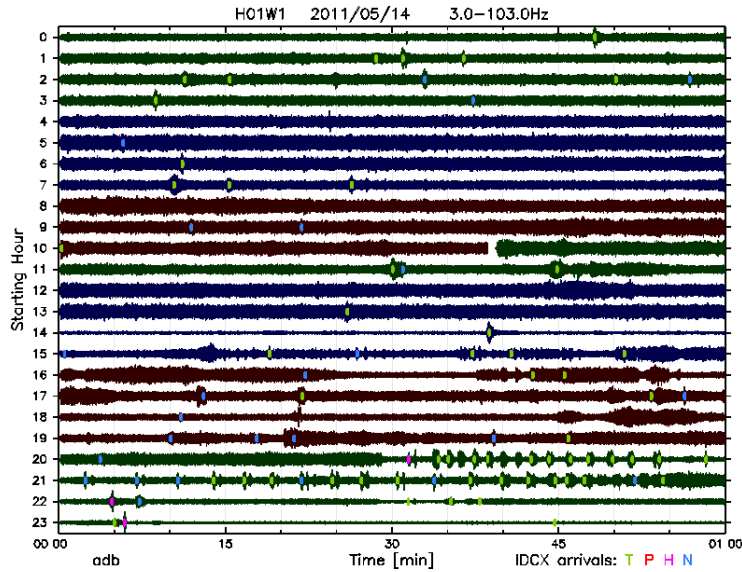


Figure 21: Broadband (3 Hz to 103 Hz) pressure time series (24 h) for Cape Leeuwin.

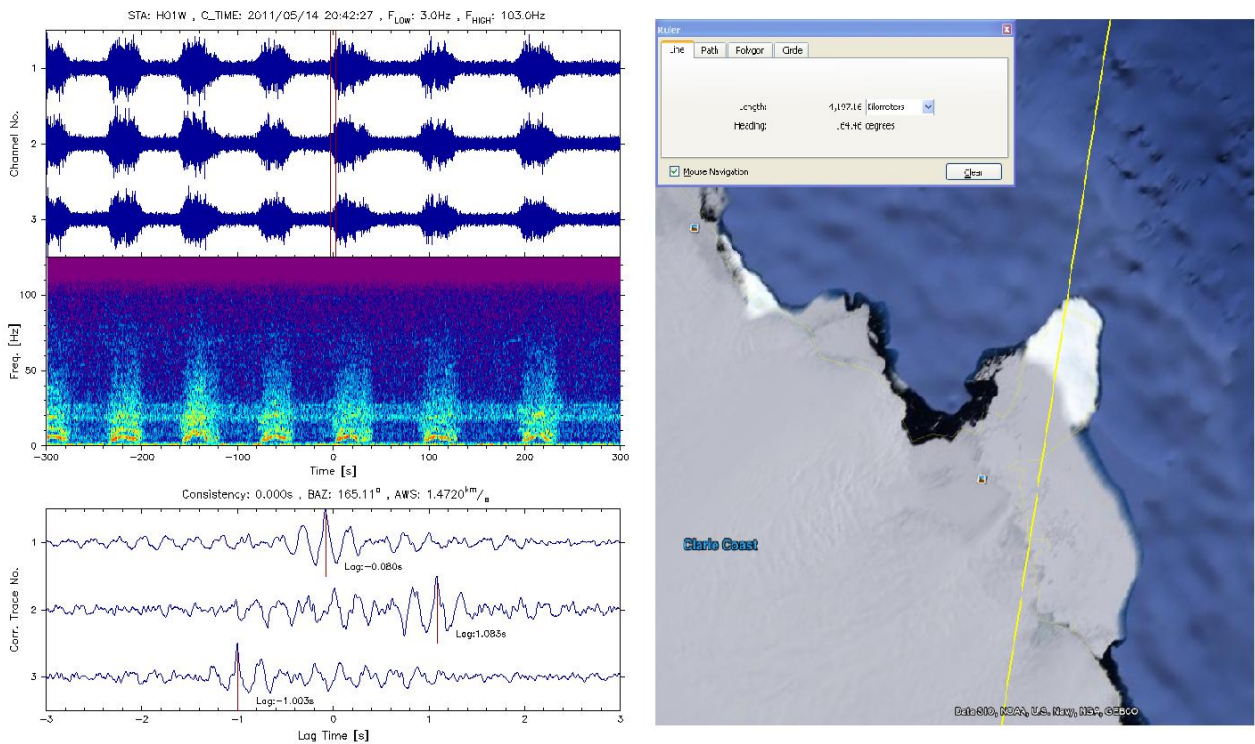


Figure 22: Left: Close-up of broadband (3 Hz to 103 Hz) pressure time series and spectrogram at 20:42:27 ± 300 s on 14 May 2011 for Cape Leeuwin; lower graph shows time lag plot indicating sound originates from bearing 165 deg. Right: Ice tongue on Antarctica at bearing 165.

### JUAN FERNÁNDEZ ISLANDS

The noise levels at Juan Fernández (Figure 23) were measured to be more or less the same throughout the year (Figure 24).



Figure 23: Location of Juan Fernández Islands (hydrophone station H03).

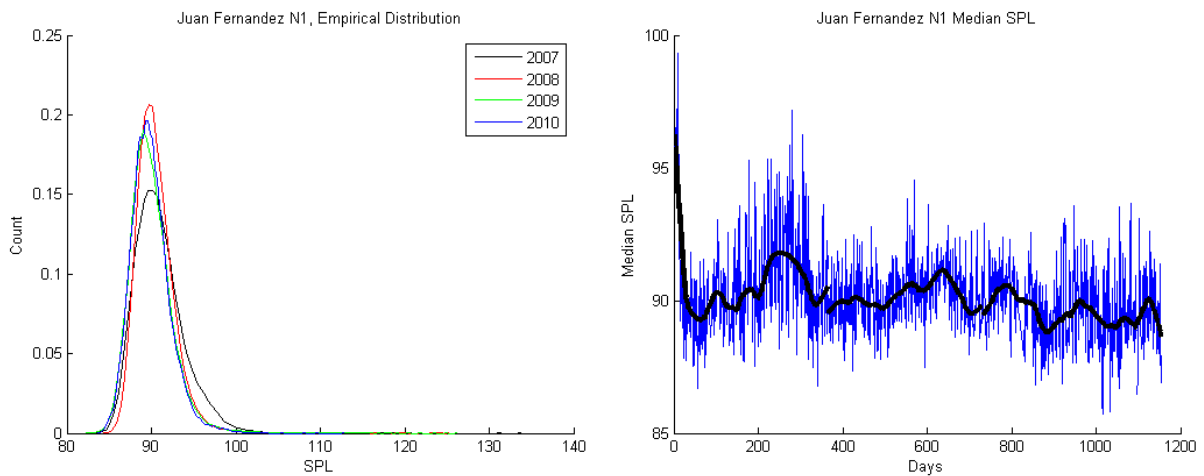


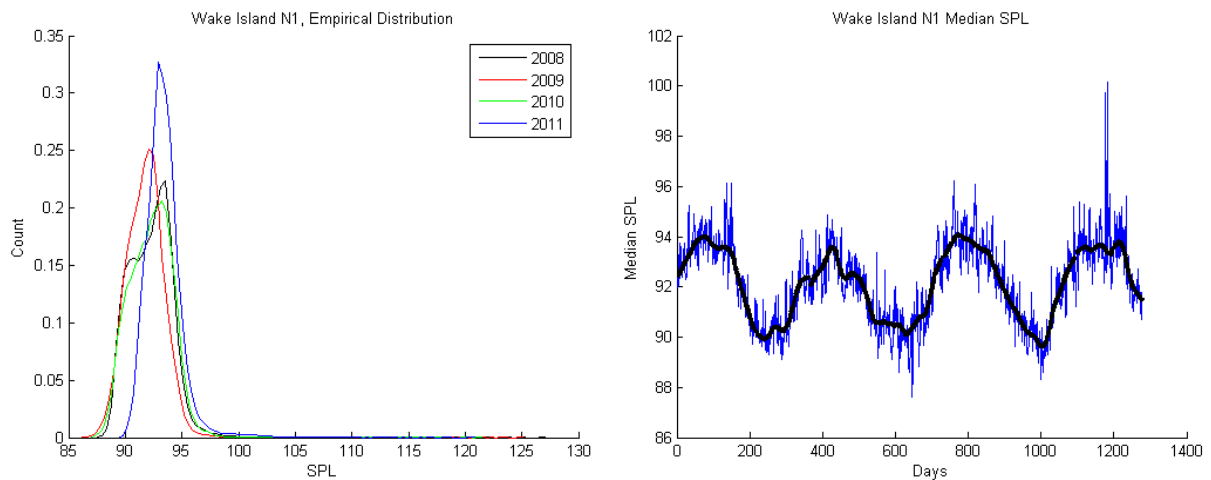
Figure 24: Left graph: Histogram of  $SPL_{63}$  distribution for Juan Fernández Islands ( $T = 65.5$  s); daily median of  $SPL_{63}$  vs time.

### WAKE ISLAND

As with Cape Leeuwin, a strong seasonal cycle at Wake Island (Figure 25) gives rise to an almost bimodal distribution of the sound levels. Since only the first six months of 2011 were available its distribution was more unimodal.



**Figure 25: Location of Wake Island (hydrophone station H11), well placed for the Tohoku earthquake.**



**Figure 26: Left graph: Histogram of SPL<sub>63</sub> distribution for Wake Island (T = 65.5 s); daily median of SPL<sub>63</sub> vs time.**

The sharp peak ca. day 1200 (Fig. 27 and 28) corresponds to an earthquake of 11 March 2011 at Tohoku and its aftershocks. Figure 29 shows the time series recorded by the Wake Island hydrophone (H11) two days after the earthquake illustrating these aftershocks.



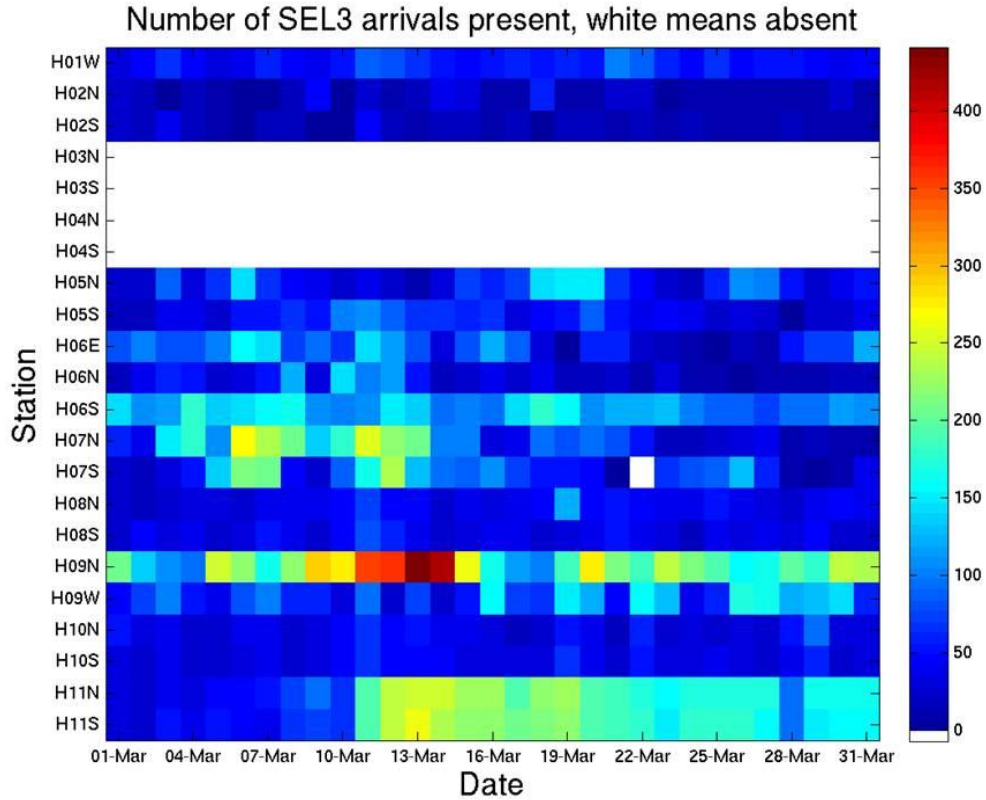


Figure 27: The abrupt increase of activity at H11 (Wake Island) on 11 March 2011, caused by the Tohoku earthquake.

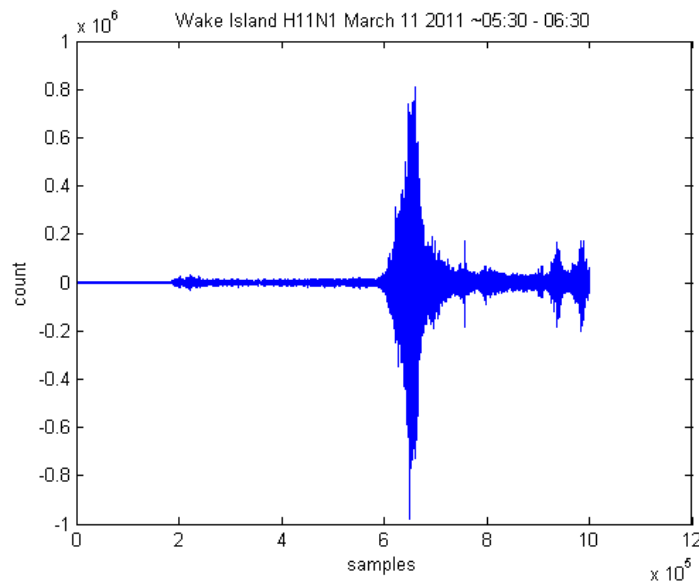


Figure 28: Broadband pressure signature on H11 (Wake Island) caused by Tohoku earthquake on 11 March 2011. The maximum sound pressure magnitude corresponds to a sound pressure of -550 Pa ( $-10^6$  counts, with a sensitivity of 1.83 counts per millipascal).

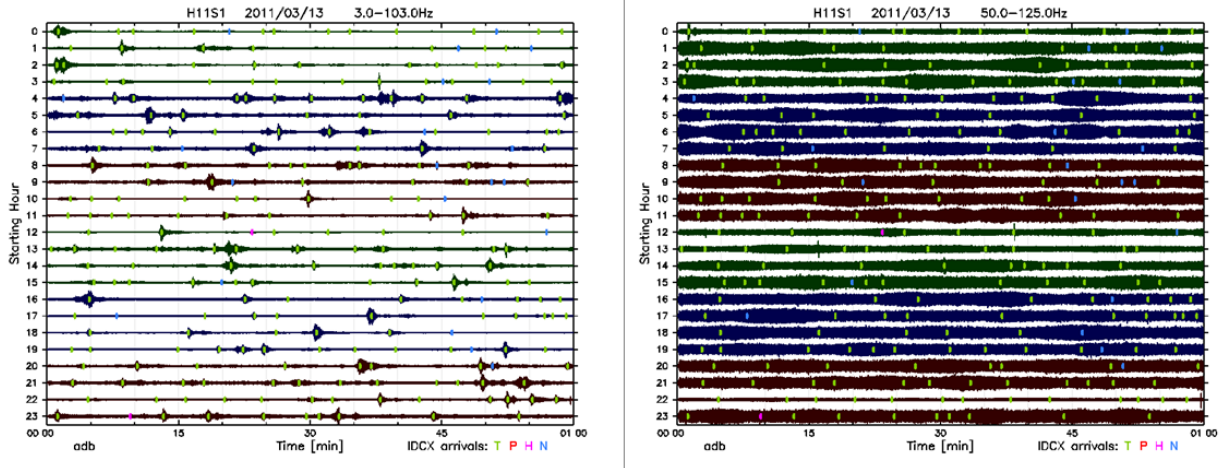


Figure 29: Pressure time series (24 h) for Wake Island on 13 March 2011. Left: broadband (3 Hz to 103 Hz); right: filtered in the frequency band 50 Hz to 125 Hz.

### 2.24.1 Annual averages

Different systems are likely to use different segment durations, so it is important to look at the effect of changing the averaging time. The term “snapshot” is adopted to mean a collection of one or more segments combined together for the purpose of evaluating the mean square pressure. The snapshot duration (T) is an integer multiple of the segment duration (in this case 65.5 s). For each snapshot duration, the number of snapshots in a year is approximately 365.25 days/T.

Four types of annual average are considered, arithmetic mean, geometric mean, median and mode. The median, denoted  $L_M(T)$ , is the median of all  $SPL_{63}$  snapshots of averaging time T. The mode is the value that appears most often in a set of data. The arithmetic and geometric means are defined as follows.

First the arithmetic mean  $A(T)$  is

$$A(T) \equiv \frac{1}{N(T)} \sum_{n=1}^{N(T)} P_n(T)$$

where  $N(T)$  is the number of snapshots of duration T in one year (on the assumption that the data are continuous, containing no gaps for an entire year).

$$N(T) = \frac{1 \text{ year}}{T}$$

and  $P_n(T)$  is the mean square sound pressure (in 63 Hz band) of the nth snapshot of duration T.

The arithmetic mean is expressed as a level in decibels using ( $p_{ref}$  = reference pressure = 1  $\mu$ Pa)

$$L_A(T) \equiv 10 \log_{10} \frac{A(T)}{P_{\text{ref}}^2}.$$

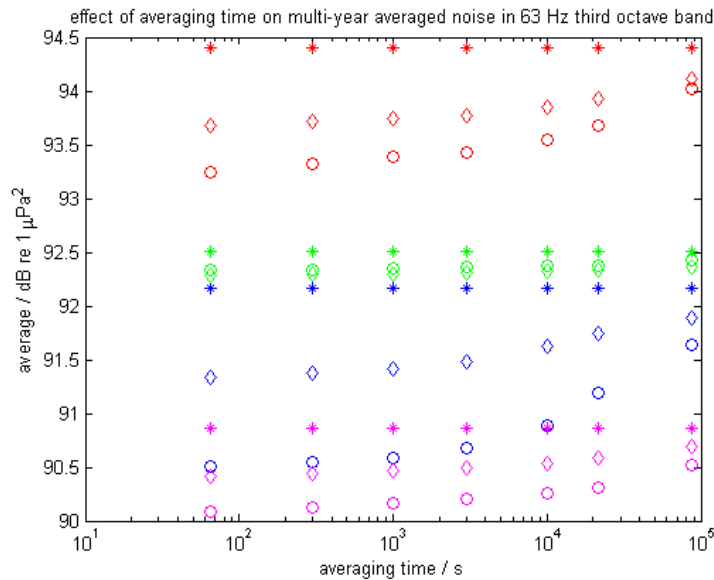
The geometric mean  $G(T)$  is

$$G(T) \equiv \left( \prod_{n=1}^{N(T)} P_n(T) \right)^{1/N(T)}.$$

The geometric mean is expressed as a level in decibels using

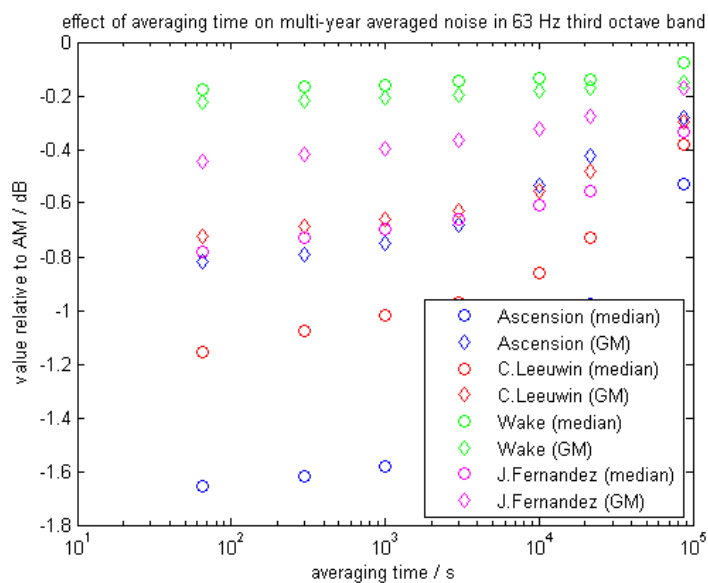
$$L_G(T) \equiv 10 \log_{10} \frac{G(T)}{P_{\text{ref}}^2}.$$

To examine how sensitive these averages are to the snapshot duration  $T$ , each of the averages vs sample duration is plotted in Figure 24. It can be seen that that  $L_A$  is independent of snapshot duration (as it theoretically should), while the other two averages vary with sample duration by up to 1.7 dB ( $L_M$ ) and 0.8 dB ( $L_G$ ). This variation can be examined in more detail by looking at differences relative to  $L_A$  and this is done in Figure 25 all averages tend to  $L_A$  for long sample duration. Snapshot durations < 65.5 s, not considered here, would lead to larger differences.



**Figure 30: Arithmetic mean (asterisks), geometric mean (diamonds) and median (circles) plotted vs snapshot duration for four CTBTO sites; colours: Ascension Island, Cape Leeuwin, Wake Island, Juan Fernández.**

Next we plot the levels relative to the arithmetic mean.



**Figure 31: Differences  $L_G - L_A$  and  $L_M - L_A$  vs snapshot duration for 4 CTBTO sites; change seems to accelerate (increase in slope) for  $T > 1$  hour; at least for Cape Leeuwin and Ascension Is. colours: Ascension Island, Cape Leeuwin, Wake Island, Juan Fernández.**

### 2.25.1 Pros and cons

	PROS	CONS
<b>Median</b>	<p>Representative of “background noise” if one wishes to exclude infrequent excursions from an otherwise stable background.</p> <p>Moderate dynamic range requirement</p>	<p>Sensitive to changes or differences in sample duration. Excludes high amplitude excursions that might contribute to total noise Incompatible with Leq metric of air acoustics</p> <p>Cannot be predicted using annually averaged properties of sound sources</p> <p>Uncertainty calculations for the median are less straight-forward and tend to lead to larger values than for the mean (for the same population) making the median less discriminating in detection of trends</p>
<b>Arithmetic mean</b>	<p>Robust to changes or differences in sample duration</p> <p>Can be predicted using annually averaged properties of sound sources</p> <p>Compatible with Leq metric of air acoustics</p> <p>Representative of mean acoustic power</p>	<p>Sensitive to outliers (extreme high values) caused by probable acquisition or processing artefacts</p> <p>Well-established metrics calculating uncertainty (variance, etc), although these tend to work better for a Gaussian distribution, which is not expected</p> <p>Requires high dynamic range to capture extreme (high) values</p>
<b>Geometric mean</b>	<p>Representative of “background noise” if one wishes to exclude infrequent (high) excursions from stable background</p>	<p>Sensitive to changes or differences in sample duration. Cannot be predicted using annually averaged properties of sound sources. Incompatible with Leq metric of air acoustics Sensitive to outliers (extreme low values) caused by measurement error. Requires high dynamic range to capture extreme (low) values</p>
<b>Mode</b>	<p>Representative of “background noise” if one wishes to exclude infrequent excursions from a stable background.</p> <p>Represents the most likely level</p>	<p>Sensitive to changes or differences in sample duration, and to the choice of bin size. Cannot be predicted using annually averaged properties of sound sources. Incompatible with Leq metric of air acoustics.</p> <p>Unstable if the distribution contains two or more peaks (e.g. for a bimodal distribution with two different values that are equally probable)</p>

Table 7: Summary of pros and cons.

### 2.26.1 Discussion

The four requirements for an averaging method are addressed below:

#### Robust to minor changes or differences in implementation

For the measurements from CTBTO stations presented in this memo, dependence on snapshot duration of  $L_M$  is up to 1.7 dB and of  $L_G$  up to 0.8 dB (the largest values both occurring for Ascension Island). Variations depend on site, with the smallest variation occurring for Wake Island (up to about 0.2 dB). Measurements reported by [Merchant *et al.*, 2012] show greater sensitivity in an area close

to a heavy shipping lane (and therefore more relevant to Indicator 2), with a dependence of  $L_M$  on snapshot duration up to 15 dB and of  $L_G$  up to 14 dB.

More important than the magnitude of the difference between  $L_A$  and  $L_M$  is the year to year variability in this difference. The measurements reported in [Van der Schaar *et al.*, 2013] demonstrate year to year changes between 0.9 dB (Wake Island) and 3.8 dB (Ascension Island).

$L_A$  is always independent of snapshot duration. To obtain an average that is independent of snapshot duration using a geometric mean (GM) or median requires a snapshot duration exceeding 1 e5 s (ca. 1 day). Such a long averaging time is not considered practical. An arithmetic mean (AM) is the only kind of average that is robust to the choice of snapshot duration for short snapshots. An additional advantage of AM is that it can be predicted using annually averaged properties of the main sound sources. Use of AM would also permit comparison with other data sets (e.g., CTBTO or US data), likely to use a different snapshot duration than EU MS. The main disadvantages of AM are its sensitivity to high outliers caused by measurement error or equipment failure and the requirement for a high dynamic range to capture high amplitude events.

### **Physically meaningful and representative of a large enough region to justify its use as an indicator of GES**

It can be argued that infrequent sounds are less likely to affect GES than frequent ones. For example, if one wished to exclude rare events similar to the Tohoku earthquake (see Figure 22), partial or complete exclusion of infrequent sounds can be achieved by means of the GM or median. The risk of doing so is that one might unwittingly exclude sounds of direct relevance to GES (the passage of one ferry per hour might be the only source of anthropogenic sound in an otherwise quiet background; a 3-month long seismic survey that raises the background by 30 dB during that period would be excluded). For this reason, a careful choice of snapshot duration would be required. In particular, if we go down this path we need to answer the questions:

- Which events should we exclude?
- Why do we want to exclude them?
- How can we exclude them without throwing out the baby with the bathwater? (i.e., how to choose the right snapshot duration consistent with excluding those events, and only those events.

One can also argue that the physically meaningful quantity is mean square sound pressure if we are interested in the average acoustic power. This would be in line with common practice in air acoustics ISO 1966, where the concept of “Leq” is used for long-term averages of a sound pressure time series, with the values transformed into decibels only after averaging. If the data are available in decibel form (as might be the case if measured using a sound level meter), these must first be converted to pascals squared before averaging and then transformed back to dB afterward [ISO 1996-1:2003]. Essentially, use of an arithmetic mean would be equivalent to an Leq approach, as adopted also, as an interim measure, by CetSound [Gisiner 2012] “The physics and biology of underwater sound make it difficult to come up with a universal metric; [received sound pressure level, sound exposure level], band-averaged weighting or other metrics all fall short under certain contexts. It is sufficient for now that Leq can serve as a kind of ‘straw man [proposal]’ for weighting the pros and cons of alternatives”.<sup>16</sup>

The requirement for Indicator 2 to be representative of a “large region” leads potentially to a need for multiple monitoring locations.

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<sup>16</sup> A “straw man proposal” is a simple draft proposal intended to generate discussion of its disadvantages and to provoke the generation of new and better proposals. For more explanation and examples, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw\\_man\\_proposal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw_man_proposal)

A complete description of the acoustic conditions would need to include separate descriptions of the (yet to be defined) general background level and the nature of the highest intensity events, including their frequency of occurrence. Loud, impulsive noises can have severe impacts on well-being for humans and other animals but - if infrequent enough - might make a negligible contribution to the averaged sound field. Different averages will be more or less sensitive to occasional loud signals but any over-arching description of the acoustic conditions in an area should be sensitive to such signals because they form an important part of those conditions. Conversely, if the sounds are infrequent but still influence the mean, they would have been high intensity events. Therefore, the difference between the AM and the median might be a way of determining the potential for occasional acute effects.

Masking and stress are possible chronic effects, for which it might be legitimate to neglect infrequent events, regardless of their intensity. While it is not obvious how this should be done, a possible way ahead is suggested by [ISO 2003], which defines “residual sound”, one of three “sound designations”, as (emphasis added).

**Residual sound:** total sound remaining at a given position in a given situation when the **specific sounds** under consideration are suppressed

The other two sound designations are:

**Specific sound:** component of the **total sound** that can be specifically identified and which is associated with a specific source,

and

**total sound:** totally encompassing in a given situation at a given time, usually composed of sound from many sources near and far

A similar definition of “residual sound” is provided by [ANSI 1988], including the following clarifying note: “Residual sound may be approximated by the percentile sound level exceeded during 90-95 percent of the measurement period.”

Also defined by [ISO 2003] is the **N percent exceedance level:** “time-weighted and frequency-weighted sound pressure level that is exceeded for N % of the time interval considered”

The duration of the period of (relative) silence between intermittent sounds is an important parameter in determining potential for masking. If we retain only an amplitude distribution we lose this information. For this reason, if we are concerned about masking we advise retaining the full sound pressure level distribution vs time for a fixed averaging time to be determined.

### **Practical (simple to implement)**

Any of the four averages considered (AM, GM, median or mode) is simple to implement from the point of view of a single monitoring location, if a data series of SPL snapshots vs time is available at that location. But to claim to monitor GES there is potentially a need for many monitoring stations. We do not expect the number of measurement stations to be large, and the only practical method to extrapolate from a small number of measurements to a large number of monitoring points is through modelling. Any of the averages can be calculated in principle using a computer model of the fluctuating noise field, with which fluctuations due to moving or intermittent sources are then modelled. A sequence in time of the desired duration (for Indicator 2 this would be one year) can be calculated and used to synthesise an annual snapshot distribution, from which the desired statistics can be computed. In practice the large amount of computation required for this approach might cause difficulties. A more practical approach is to average the source distribution over a year and use this

average source distribution directly to predict the annually averaged squared sound pressure. Only the AM can be calculated in this way.

### **Compatibility with comparable regulations or procedures**

While compatibility with procedures followed by others is not considered essential, it is at least desirable. Of particular relevance are:

- international standards or agreements for sound in air (e.g. END or ISO 1996/ANSI for residual sound)
- US Cetacean and Sound Mapping ‘CetSound’ project [NOAA 2012]

The European Noise Directive uses the AM (in the form of an annually averaged Leq) for airborne noise. The US CetSound project has adopted the AM as an interim measure, pending further research.

The ANSI definition of “residual sound” is used by [ref Fristrup *et al.*, pp. 50-53, for sound in air] to justify the 90 percent exceedance level as a measure of “residual or background sound level”. For application to underwater noise, a choice of snapshot duration would be needed.

## **2.27.1 Conclusions**

The conclusions depend on one’s interpretation of “ambient noise” as follows.

### **Conclusion 1: Use arithmetic mean**

AM is the only type of average that for short snapshot durations is compatible with the Feb 2012 TSG definition of ambient noise and robust to differences or changes in snapshot duration. It is also compatible with the annual average noise level required by the Environmental Noise Directive, as well as the “straw man proposal” adopted by Cetsound [Gisiner 2012].

The main disadvantage of AM is its sensitivity to infinities in the data.

Use of the AM follows from the TSG definition. Care is needed to avoid measurement error and equipment failure. This will ensure all sounds are included, both natural and anthropogenic, regardless of their duration or frequency of occurrence.

### **Conclusion 2: Use mode**

An alternative definition of “ambient noise” as the most likely value leads to the mode. The mode, like the median and GM, depends on the snapshot duration. If one wishes to exclude infrequent sounds from the definition of ambient noise, a possible way of achieving this is by use of the mode. The snapshot duration would need to be chosen carefully to avoid losing the baby with the bathwater. This duration would need to be a constant in order to establish a trend.

### **Conclusion 3: Use a fixed percentile or distribution of percentiles**

An example of a fixed percentile is the median. This quantity is sometimes used [Andrew *et al.*, 2011, Merchant *et al.*, 2012 **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.**, Van der Schaar *et al.*, 2013], but the present authors are not aware of a definition of “ambient noise” that would lead to the adoption of median as a metric. The main benefits of the median are its robustness and its low dynamic range requirement.



To the extent that computer modelling is used to monitor ambient noise, use of a fixed percentile (or mode) requires high fidelity predictions of the snapshot distribution resulting from fluctuations in time, which is likely to result in a heavier computational problem, requiring a more complicated computer model, or longer computation time or both.

If one were to define “ambient noise” as “residual noise”, then according to ANSI this quantity can be estimated using the 90 percent exceedance level.

If one requires a metric relevant to chronic effect and wishes to exclude infrequent sounds, the best way to facilitate this is to retain not only the complete probability distribution, but also the time series of SPL snapshots that results in that distribution (because we don't yet know what to calculate, and the separation in time between successive events might be important).

### **2.28.1 Recommendation**

What we seek is a metric of continuous ambient noise that reflects cumulative chronic effects of shipping noise. Research is needed to identify the nature and frequency of occurrence of sounds leading to relevant chronic effects. As an initial measure, TSG Noise advises MS to adopt the arithmetic mean (AM). The main considerations in reaching this recommendation are:

- a) the AM includes all sounds, so there is no risk of neglecting important ones.
- b) the AM is independent of snapshot duration.

The trend is the trend in the AM.

In order to establish the statistical significance of this trend, additional statistical information about the distribution is necessary. The rationale that led to Indicator 11.2.1 was associated with a concern that anthropogenic noise might mask important acoustic cues [Tasker *et al.*, 2010]. If the ambient noise includes loud transient sounds (air gun pulses, passing ships, etc), the potential for masking of these sounds is limited to some extent by the duration of the relatively quiet periods between these transients. For this reason, TSG Noise considers that information about time dependence is needed in addition to an amplitude distribution. Therefore, TSG Noise recommends that the complete distribution be retained in the form of sound pressure level as a function of time, with an averaging time to be specified. If it is not possible to store the full time series, TSG Noise advises to retain the amplitude distribution for this purpose in bins of 1 dB, and the associated snapshot duration (see also chapter 5.6.8). TSG Noise advises MS to use a snapshot duration not exceeding one minute.

## 1.8 Experience from other projects

(Author: J.F. Borsani)

### Ligurian Sea (Mediterranean Sea) long-term low-frequency monitoring (1999-2002).

From 31 August 1999 to 7 September 2002 autonomous recorders (called “Pop-Ups”) were deployed in the Ligurian Sea. The deployments were part of a collaborative study between ICRAM – the Italian Central Institute for Marine Research (now ISPRA) and the Bioacoustics Research Project of Cornell University, USA. Eighteen measuring units, sampling in ranges from 1 kHz to 2 kHz were deployed at water depths between a few tens of metres and 1421m. A total of 15 720 hours of sound recordings were extracted. Several lessons with respect to a) deployment technique and b) analysis methods were learnt. Scientific results are summarized in Clark *et al.* [2002] and Borsani *et al.* [2008].

recommendations made by [Borsani *et al.*, 2008] include:

- 1) Small hydrophone arrays (e.g. 3-4 elements) perform better than single recording units (noise reduction, range and direction finding up to a certain degree depending on array aperture);
- 2) The deeper hydrophones are deployed, the better (minimizes surface noise, avoids low-frequency cut off, prevents collisions, minimizes risk of trawling and accidental removal);
- 3) Free mooring lines of at least 10 m with kit weighing a maximum of 20 kg in air (prevents kit from banging on sea bottom);
- 4) Soft anchors (e.g., sandbags) are better than discrete anchors (minimizes risk of drifting and melts with the substrate);
- 5) “Silent” mooring is an asset (all metal or hard plastic parts must be embedded in rubber to avoid self-noise and corrosion)
- 6) Solid state drives are better than hard disk drives (no spin-up noise and low power drain, equals longer duration)
- 7) At the same cost of deployment, a higher sampling rate is achievable if a statistically robust duty cycle is applied (e.g., for shipping noise 1 hour on – 11 hours off)
- 8) Continuous recording of at least 60 minutes in a row is desirable (usually 60 minutes comprise a whole ship passage as well as small bits of ambient noise levels).
- 9) Real time or delayed time data transmission is better than archival recorders (huge data sets to be processed at once require exponentially growing costs as opposed to smaller datasets analysed in subsequent sets);
- 10) If analysis is done manually 1 hour of recordings @ 2 kHz signal recording can take up to 3-5 hours for analysis and reporting; automatic or semi-automatic systems mitigate this but need frequent maintenance and instructions.

## 1.9 Issues with the performance of noise recording systems

(Author: S.P. Robinson)

As stated in the 2012 TSG report [Van der Graaf, 2012], the complete measurement system used to make the measurements must be calibrated if absolute measurements are required. This includes the hydrophones, amplifiers, filters and analogue to digital converter (ADC). The calibration can be undertaken either by full system calibration, or by calibration of individual components. The calibration should cover the full frequency range of use, be traceable to national or international standards, and conform to IEC 60565-2006 or ANSI/ASA S1.20-2012. Before and after deployment, it is advisable to make use of a commercially available hydrophone-calibrator, which provides the hydrophone with a single-frequency tone of well-defined amplitude (commonly at 250 Hz).

In addition, the dynamic range of the measurement system should be sufficient to faithfully record the largest signals of interest without clipping or distortion, and the system self-noise (a measure of the noise originating from the hydrophone and recording system in the absence of any acoustic signal, expressed in terms of an equivalent sound pressure level) should ideally be at least 6 dB below the lowest noise level of interest of the frequency range of interest. The recorded signals may also be contaminated by signals due to “platform self-noise”, extraneous signals due to the deployment method for the hydrophone and recording system and its interaction with the surrounding environment (e.g. current, sea-state, etc). Steps should be taken to minimise these sources of parasitic signals [Van der Graaf, 2012].

The above applies to all measurement systems, whether integrated or consisting of separate components. Recently, integrated autonomous recorders have become more commonplace. The guidance provided in the 2012 TSG report is equally valid for these systems, but there are a few specific points that should perhaps be emphasised.

### 2.29.1 Summary of issues for autonomous recorders

There have been an increasing number of commercially available autonomous recorders coming on to the market to address the need for in-situ measurement of underwater noise. Their use is motivated by the need to monitor underwater noise, including in response to the requirements of Indicator 11.2 of the EU Marine Strategy Framework directive. The performance of these systems is a crucial factor governing the quality of the measured data. However, the performance of commercially available systems not always is adequate for the task of absolute measurement of underwater noise. The noise recorders coming to market are sometimes converted from systems designed for other tasks where the absolute calibration is not required and high quality recordings are not essential. The requirements were discussed in detail in the 2012 TSG Noise report [Van der Graaf, 2012]. However, with the advent of commercial-off-the-shelf systems, TSG Noise again wants to emphasise the importance of these calibration issues to those procuring systems for use in noise monitoring in response to the Directive.

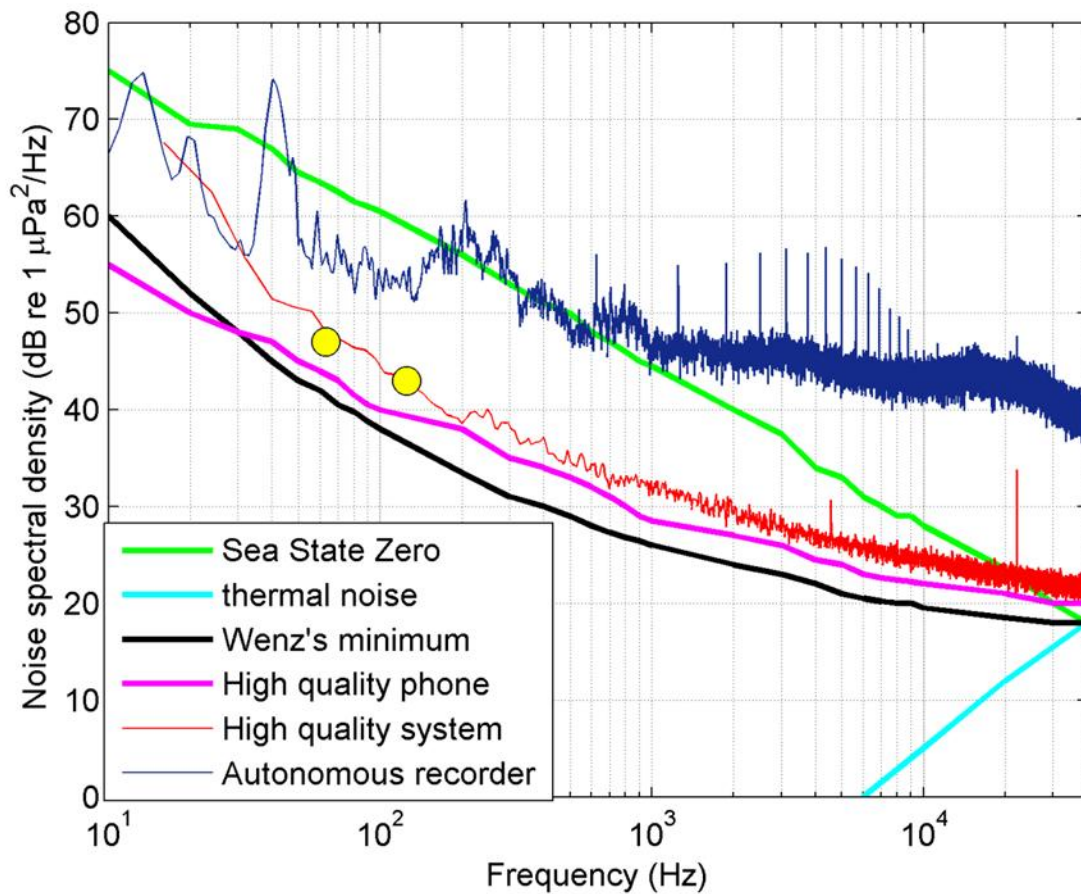
To prevent procurement of inadequate monitoring equipment, users should ensure that the equipment performance meets the needs of the measurement requirement, and make specific requests of suppliers with regard to performance. Key parameters where performance may sometimes be lacking include:

### 2.30.1 Calibration

Many of the commercial systems are not supplied with a calibration. A calibration is essential and should consist of a full system calibration (including hydrophones, amplifiers, and digitisation system). Ideally, a traceable calibration should be obtained from an accredited independent source, rather than relying on nominal figures from manufacturer’s data.

### 2.31.1 Self-noise

For a system designed to measure in a low noise situation, the TSG 2012 report recommended maximum self-noise of 47 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2/\text{Hz}$  at 63 Hz and 43 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}^2/\text{Hz}$  at 125 Hz. These self-noise values are challenging and may not be achieved by all of the commercial systems available, where the self-noise can be 10 dB higher at these frequencies, and even higher at kilohertz frequencies. For measurements of higher noise levels (for example, for deployment close to shipping lanes), these requirements may be relaxed somewhat, but the self-noise should still be at least 6 dB below the lowest noise level of interest. The self-noise can originate from poor choice of hydrophone and amplifiers, or from pick-up of electrical noise generated by the electronics and data storage system. Figure X shows the self-noise for a system with a relatively poor performance when compared the desired specification stated in the 2012 TSG report.



**Figure 32: Noise spectral density data showing the performance (self-noise) of an autonomous recorder with relatively high self-noise.** The yellow dots indicate the desired performance (self-noise) stated in the 2012 TSG Noise Report at frequencies of 63 Hz and 125 Hz. Also shown are the measured self-noise of a typical good quality hydrophone and separate recording system, and the sea state zero and Wenz's minimum noise spectra.

### 2.32.1 Dynamic range

Some commercial systems suffer from relatively poor dynamic range so that the large amplitude signals that can be detected at low frequencies can sometimes saturate the recorders. An ideal system would have 24-bit resolution, and be capable of measuring up to 180 dB re  $1 \mu\text{Pa}$  to record vessels passing close by. This is challenging, and many systems will not achieve the dynamic range in combination with the self-noise requirements, but in any case the actual dynamic range should be

known so that the maximum undistorted signal level can be estimated, and any saturated signals eliminated during analysis of the data.

### **2.33.1 Data storage**

To avoid degradation of the data quality, the data format used to store the data should be lossless. Any crucial auxiliary data or metadata which is needed for interpretation of the results (for example, the scale factor or setting of the ADC) should be recorded. It is desirable that such information be included in a file header or log file so that the information is kept with the data. Though a number of suitable data formats exist, there is no standardised format for storing ocean noise data – it is recommended that this be the subject of future standardisation activity.

## 1.10 Rate of the increase of 63 Hz band underwater noise in the Pacific Ocean

(Author: M.A. Ainslie)

### Summary

The purpose of this section is to quantify the rate of increase of ambient noise based on available measurements since the 1960s. Because no suitable data are available in European waters, the data used are taken from [Andrew et al. 2011], for the north-east Pacific Ocean. Conclusions are listed in the final sub-chapter.

#### 2.34.1 Introduction

The Commission Decision of 2010 [EC, 2010] proposes to determine trends in ambient noise. In this note an estimate is provided of the rate of increase of sound pressure level (SPL) at 63 Hz third-octave band in the northeast Pacific based on the measurements described by [Andrew et al., 2011].

#### 2.35.1 Overview of available data

The following table lists the spectral density levels (SDLs) reported in Table II from Andrew et al. [2011] in the 63 Hz third octave band<sup>17</sup> for measurements carried out ca. 1965 (column 2) and ca. 2000 (column 4). The SDL is converted to SPL in columns 3 and 5. The increase (difference between 2000 and 1965 values) is listed in column 6.

system	Wenz (ca 1965)		APL UW (ca 2000)		increase total (per decade) / dB
	SDL / dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2/\text{Hz}$	SPL / dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}$	SDL / dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2/\text{Hz}$	SPL / dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}$	
d (Point Sur)	82.0	93.6	87.0	98.6	5.0 (1.4)
f (San Nicolas Island)	74.4	86.0	80.5	92.1	6.1 (1.7)
g (near northern California)	79.2	90.8	81.8	93.4	2.6 (0.7)
h	82.0	93.6	87.7	99.3	5.7 (1.6)
average	<b>80.3</b>	<b>91.9</b>	<b>85.3</b>	<b>96.9</b>	5.0 (1.4)

**Table 8: Spectral density levels (SDLs); Andrew et al. [2011] in the 63 Hz third octave band for measurements carried out ca. 1965 (column 2) and ca. 2000 (column 4).**

Measurements are reported for four deep water sites in the northeast Pacific Ocean. Spatial averages (across the 4 sites) are calculated using a linear average in mean square pressure “average”. For this row the “increase” column shows the increase in the average (and not the average of the 4 separate increases, which is 4.9 dB).

The averaging methods applied by Wenz and APL are not identical. APL calculates a median, which is sensitive to the snapshot duration (163.84 s)<sup>18</sup>, while Wenz calculates a geometric mean after removing outliers. According to Andrew et al. [2011], this process is approximately equivalent to the median. Wenz snapshot duration is ca 200 s.

<sup>17</sup> values at 125 Hz are not included in Table II of Andrew et al.

<sup>18</sup> Averaging procedure described on p643, half way down rh column

Both the median and geometric mean (GM) underestimate the true sound pressure level, which by definition is calculated using an arithmetic mean (AM) of the squared pressure samples. The difference between the median (or GM) and the AM depends on the details of the distribution. For CTBTO sites it is between 1 dB and 6 dB, the averaged difference between the GM and the AM is approximately 2.25 dB [Van der Schaar *et al.*, 2013, Marine Systems (submitted)].

### **2.36.1 Conclusions**

- The difference of 5 dB in 35 years amounts to 1.4 dB per decade on average, in deep water.
- A similar trend can be expected in deep water in other parts of the industrialised world. It is not possible to confirm this expectation by measurements in European waters because it is about the last 35 years of the 20th Century, for which no suitable measurements are known to the authors. It might be possible to do so by means of a hind cast with a validated computer model.
- In shallow water the trend is likely to be different. There is no information available on whether this trend is likely to be greater or less than 1.4 dB/decade in shallow water.
- Spatial variation in SPL at 63 Hz across these 4 deep water sites is ca 8 dB. In shallow water the variation it is likely to be greater than in deep water.

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## List of Symbols, Acronyms and Abbreviations

SYMBOLS, ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	DESCRIPTION
ADC	Analogue to Digital Converter
ADD	Acoustic Deterrent Device
AHD	Acoustic Harassment Device
AIS	Automatic Identification Systems
AM	Arithmetic mean - the TSG Noise interpretation
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
APL UW	Applied Physics Laboratory, University of Washington (USA)
ASA	Acoustical Society of America
BIAS	Baltic Sea Information on the Acoustic Soundscape
BOEM	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (USA)
CD	Commission Decision 2010/477/EU
CMRC (Ireland)	Coastal and Marine Research Centre, Ireland
CNOSSOS-EU	Common Noise Assessment Methods of the European Union
CS	cylindrical spreading
CTBTO	<u>Preparatory Commission</u> for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization / in part 2 as: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
dB	decibel, the most generally used logarithmic scale for describing sound
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change (UK)
DG ENV	Directorate General on Environment of the European Commission
EC	European Commission
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zones
$E_{\text{hammer}}$	Hammer energy
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
END	Environmental Noise Directive: European Directive 2002/49/EC [2002/49/EC]
EU	European Union
EUCC	Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)
GCS European 1950	GCS, GEOGCS (Geographic Coordinate System)
GES	Good Environmental Status as defined in the MSFD
GM	Geometric mean (- equivalent to average in decibels)
h	hours
H#	CTBTO hydrophone station, no. #
Hz	hertz, the SI unit of frequency defined as the number of cycles per second of a periodic phenomenon
ICES	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
ICRAM	Italian Central Institute for Marine Research (now ISPRA)
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
IEC 60565-2006	Norm: Underwater acoustics - Hydrophones - Calibration in the frequency range 0,01 Hz to 1 MHz
IMARES	Institute for Marine Resources & Ecosystem Studies, Wageningen, NL
IQOE	International Quiet Ocean Experiment
Irish EPA	Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (UK)
LIDO	Listening to the Deep-Ocean Environment
LIFE+ programme	Regulation (EC) No 614/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007 concerning the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+)
log	logarithm
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
MS	Member State (of the EU)
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive, 2008/56/EC
$m_{\text{TNTeq}}$	TNT equivalent charge mass
nmi	Nautical mile (1 nmi = 1852 m)

<b>SYMBOLS, ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>NOAA</b>	U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<b>NRC</b>	National Research Center ( <a href="#">USA</a> )
<b>NW-Europe</b>	North-West Europe
<b>OSPAR</b>	The OSPAR convention (short for “Oslo-Paris” convention) is the current legal instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.
<b>Pa</b>	pascal, the SI derived unit of pressure (one newton per square metre)
<b>PCAD</b>	Population Consequences of Acoustic Disturbance
<b>PL</b>	propagation loss
<b>Quonops</b>	Ocean Noise Anthropogenic Forecasting Platform
<b>RL</b>	Received Level
<b>RMS</b>	Root mean square
<b>RNLN</b>	Royal Netherlands Navy
<b><math>R_{ps}</math></b>	ranges where response is relevant
<b>RWS</b>	Rijkswaterstaat (NL)
<b>SDL</b>	spectral density level
<b>SEL</b>	sound exposure level
<b>SEAMARCO</b>	Sea Mammal Research Company
<b>SI</b>	The International System of Units
<b>SL</b>	source level
<b><math>SL_E</math></b>	energy source level
<b><math>SL_{zp}</math></b>	zero to peak source level
<b>SPL</b>	sound pressure level
<b>STRIVE Noise</b>	Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for the Environment
<b><math>T</math></b>	snapshot duration
<b>TG11</b>	Task Group of Descriptor 11 (Noise/Energy) of the MSFD (EC Decision 2010/477/EU)
<b>TNO</b>	Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (NL)
<b>TNT</b>	Trinitrotoluene, $C_6H_2(NO_2)_3CH_3$
<b>TSG Noise (TSGN)</b>	EU Technical Subgroup on Noise
<b>TTS</b>	temporary hearing threshold shift
<b>UBA</b>	Umweltbundesamt: Federal Environment Agency, Germany
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>US CetSound</b>	"As a result, two data and product-driven working groups were convened in January 2011: the Underwater Sound-field Mapping Working Group (SoundMap) and the Cetacean Density and Distribution Mapping Working Group (CetMap). The overarching effort of both Working Groups is referred to as CetSound.
<b>VMS</b>	Vessel monitoring system
<b>WG GES</b>	EU Working Group Good Environmental Status
<b>WGS84</b>	World Geodetic System, the reference coordinate system WGS 84 is used by the Global Positioning System.
<b><math>\mu Pa</math></b>	micropascal

**Note:** The SI units and unit symbols that are used in this report are not listed in this list, these are followed according to BIPM SI brochure (8<sup>th</sup> edition), available from <http://www.bipm.org/en/si/> .

## Attachment 4

### Partners of the LIFE+ BIAS project

**Sweden:** Swedish Defence Research Agency: Peter Sigraay (Project Coordinator),

**Denmark:** Aarhus University: Jakob Tougaard,

**Estonia:** Tallinn University of Technology: Janek Laanearu,

**Finland:** Finnish Environment Institute: Jukka Pajala,

**Germany:** Institute for Technical and Applied Physics: Ursula Verfuß,

German Maritime and Hydrographic Agency: Jens Fischer,

**Poland:** Foundation of the Development of University of Gdańsk: Jaroslaw Tegowski.