

**Interreg**  
North Sea



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DEMASK

**Development and Evaluation of noise Management  
Strategies to Keep the North Sea healthy (DEMASK)  
2024 – 2027**

## **Stakeholder engagement and communication plan**

**WP 1**

**Deliverable/Task: 1**



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**Date: November 2024**

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| <b>Project Full Title</b> | <i>Development and Evaluation of noise MAnagement Strategies to Keep the North Sea healthy</i> |
| <b>Project Acronym</b>    | DEMASK   |
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#### Colophon

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## Summary (start at odd page)

The North Sea is one of the busiest shipping areas in the world. In combination with other human activities such as fishing, tourism and the increase of developing offshore wind farms to produce energy, major changes will occur in the North Sea in the next decades. However, this area is also a valuable habitat for many species, which are at risk of being impacted by human activities.

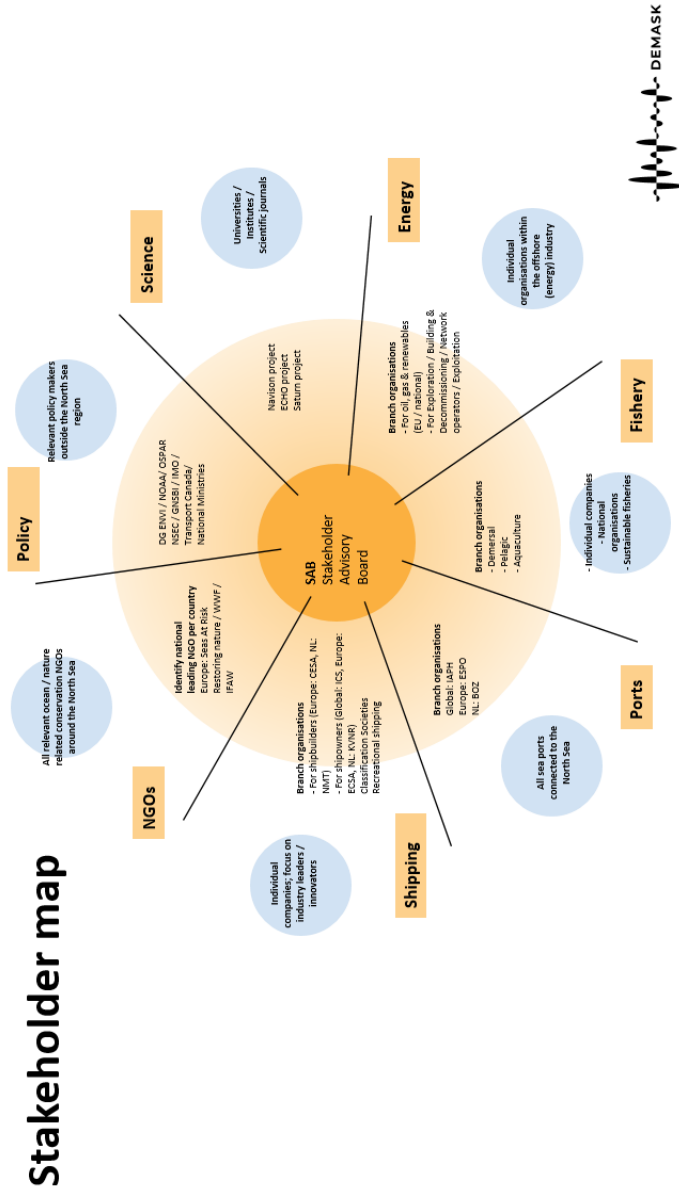
The need to manage seas in a sustainable way has been recognised in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Ocean Decade and is also reflected in various EU policies, including the Marine Spatial Planning Directive (MSP) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) as well as in the Regional Sea Conventions for the North East Atlantic (OSPAR) and the Baltic Sea (HELCOM).

Underwater noise is recognised as a major impact. EU member states are mandated to monitor and mitigate noise pollution as part of their efforts to obtain the Good Environmental Status (GES).

Following-up on the first project JOMOPANS, that provided soundscape maps on joint monitoring, DEMASK will move one step further, from monitoring to measures. The aims are to develop a strategy for defining policy scenarios for underwater noise management (WP1) and tools to quantify the effectiveness of these scenarios to mitigate noise pollution (WP2) and its effects on marine life and the environment (WP3).

The task of WP1 is to define and evaluate scenarios for the spatial development on the North Sea regarding underwater noise. In order to ensure the scenarios and policy advice are in line with the needs of persons responsible for management of underwater noise, a Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) has been established. The SAB is also needed to ensure a long-term follow-up from DEMASK after the end of the project. Therefore, the members of the SAB will provide guidance to the project on their most important needs, reflect on the progress of the project, and review and evaluate the major deliverables of the project. The SAB is the group of stakeholders most closely connected to the project, but other stakeholder groups with another level of involvement have been identified too. In order to ensure an effective and successful cooperation and collaboration with our stakeholders during the DEMASK project, the project partners have developed this stakeholder engagement and communication plan.

# 1 Stakeholder mapping



## 1.1 Mapping of stakeholders

In order to distinguish various types of stakeholders and to set expectations correctly, different stakeholder groups have been mapped based on their involvement in the DEMASK project (see figure 1). These groups have been categorised from the centre to the edge, based on the level of involvement/collaboration:

- Representation
- Collaboration
- Information

### 1. Representation

This group of stakeholders is most involved with the DEMASK project. It includes stakeholders that have been invited to participate in the Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB). The SAB will periodically provide advice and guidance to strengthen the project. The mandate of the SAB is to constructively provide critique and to review the progress made within the DEMASK project. Members of the SAB act as ambassadors for DEMASK and raise awareness for the project and its products in their own network, meaning they act as a representative of the project. Communication material to facilitate this will be made available by the project partners. The Stakeholder Advisory Board can review any deliverable from the DEMASK project prior to publication.

### 2. Collaboration

A group of stakeholders is invited to actively participate in the DEMASK project, including representatives from various sectors as listed under chapter 1.2. These stakeholders are invited to collaborate in various meetings to share their knowledge and perspectives. Some of them are asked to respond to the plans and proposals, and they can also discuss the ideas within their own organisations. There will be a regular exchange from both sides, including during Focus Group sessions, national roundtables, one-on-one exchanges and during events.

### 3. Information

Remaining stakeholders that do not fall under 'Representation' or 'Collaboration' are part of the group 'Information'. These stakeholders do not represent anything related to the project and do not contribute to active collaboration with project partners. Instead, these stakeholders will basically only be informed by the project about the progress and results. The stakeholders in this group may also be located outside of the North Sea region and may only have an indirect interest in the topic of underwater noise. However, in both situations it is worth it to inform these stakeholders as well, in order to ensure that project outcomes are shared as widely as possible.

The division of stakeholders into these three groups might be changed during the project if deemed necessary.

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## 1.2 Categorisation of stakeholders

The stakeholders identified can be subdivided into various sectors:

- Policy
- Shipping (recreational/commercial)
- Ports
- Fisheries
- Energy
- NGOs
- Science

In the next chapter, these sectors and their relevance for the DEMASK project will be explained further.

### 1.3 Stakeholder sectors

#### 1.3.1 Policy

Marine policy makers are responsible for taking measures to protect the marine environment. In the future, measures to reduce underwater noise are expected. Therefore, (marine) policy makers have to be involved with this project. Their role is based on the obligations under national and international laws. The major EU regulation for the marine environment is the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which is in force since 2008.

An important tool to implement marine regulation is the EU Marine Spatial Planning Framework (MSP). This directive aims to regulate human activities. An important role exists for the international collaboration in the regional sea convention. For the North Sea OSPAR is the regional sea convention with close links to the HELCOM convention for the Baltic Sea. A new initiative is the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI). At the initiative of The Netherlands and France the GNSBI aims to strengthen a common governance of the North Sea on all themes. Now most of the governance is organised thematically.

#### 1.3.2 Shipping (recreational/commercial)

The North Sea is one of the busiest seas in the world. Shipping is of vital economic importance, but also a source of emissions to air and to water, and the major source for continuous underwater noise. Because shipping leads to a lot of noise under water, and because therefore they do have the possibility to reduce noise, the shipping industry is involved with the DEMASK project. Shipping is regulated by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), part of the United Nations. In July 2023 the IMO adopted revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise (URN) by ships. Reducing noise remains voluntary under the IMO Revised Guidelines, though there is an increasing appreciation of the desirability of protecting marine life by reducing noise levels. This has led to a considerable volume of work on potential technological measures in the ship's design and construction, which in the long term is the best solution. Therefore, shipbuilders are also an important stakeholder group. Retrofitting ships with more silent propellers is an intermediate option. Also, operational measures like slow steaming and regular maintenance help to reduce URN.

Global agreements to mitigate climate change have led to a huge increase in the numbers and types of measures being introduced in the shipping industry to increase energy efficiency (EE) and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Possible co-benefits of those measures on the reduction of underwater noise have been studied and discussed. In the majority of cases, EE/GHG and URN measures can be complementary, i.e. benefits will be realized in both areas. In most cases, meeting regulatory requirements for EE/GHG can be compatible with efforts to mitigate URN.

Additional to commercial shipping, recreational boating is also a dominant source of underwater noise in coastal areas and therefore representatives of both sectors (commercial shipping and recreational boating) are involved in the SAB.

#### 1.3.3 Ports

Major European ports like Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Bremen and Hamburg are located at the North Sea. They are the start and end points of the major global shipping routes. Port authorities and companies in the ports already make efforts to reduce marine pollution, like treating waste and waste water in a responsible way, and offering incentives to ships with a better environmental performance. This can be done by various incentive schemes, such as the Environmental Ship Index and Clean Shipping Index. As ports have the possibility to encourage ships to lower their environmental impact, these stakeholders are of vital importance for the DEMASK project.

Underwater noise has not (yet) been included in the most widely used indexes. As an exception, Green Marine has included performance indicators on underwater noise for vessels and ports in its index since 2017 ([Green Marine, 2019](#)). These performance indicators aim to reduce the underwater noise made by vessels in order to reduce impacts on marine mammals.

A number of ports have set regulations or incentive programs to reduce vessel speed. In

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Vancouver, the speed reduction in First Narrows is now compulsory after a voluntary trial in 2018. This compulsory slowdown is in addition to the voluntary slowdown implemented by the ECHO program in Vancouver since 2017 with the specific goal of reducing underwater noise emissions. Financial incentives have been proposed by several ports or countries: Vancouver (port discount fee), Stockholm (subsidy) and Sweden (tax exemption) ([OCDE/ITF, 2018b](#)).

Furthermore, global optimisation of shipping traffic can have economic benefits, but also offers opportunities to reduce (noise) emissions, by e.g. trafficking with less ships or trafficking slower (via weather-optimized routes or just-in-time arrivals). Shipowners and ports both have the possibility and responsibility to investigate how ship emissions, including underwater noise, can be reduced.

#### **1.3.4 Fisheries**

On the North Sea is an important fishing ground.

#### **1.3.5 Energy**

Over the past decades, renewable energies have become increasingly important with wind energy from offshore power plants playing a major role in meeting energy demands. Several windfarms have been built in the North Sea and many more are already planned to be built and become operational until 2030. The noise emissions during windfarm construction are limited in time to the construction phase and are already well regulated in many countries, but the URN introduced during operation is still to be investigated. An important objective of the project is to investigate the URN generated by the service traffic needed for maintenance of the windfarms. It is important to get an estimate of its characteristics and contribution to the overall shipping noise within the North Sea and to identify potentials for noise mitigation. To be able to do this effectively, it is important to involve stakeholders from the offshore energy sector, such as energy companies, turbine production companies and service vessel providers, but also from some of the other sectors, such as marine spatial planning and NGOs.

#### **1.3.6 NGOs**

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are independent organisations that are not linked to any kind of government and do not have any commercial interest. These organisations are established to focus on achieving goals related to one or more topics, e.g. related to society or the environment. NGOs usually have a lot of specific knowledge as the topic and the goals they are working on traditionally remain the same for over a longer period of time. Based on scientific insights, NGOs independently try to collaborate with various other stakeholders in order to find solutions to tackle existing problems.

Related to URN, environmental NGOs (eNGOs) are worried about the levels of noise that harm marine life. Various of these organisations concerned with protecting seas and oceans are focusing on lowering URN as soon as possible, thereby sharing knowledge and encouraging commercial sectors operating at sea to invest in mitigation measures. As NGOs are operating independently and work towards clearly defined goals, they have a strong position in addressing issues such as URN and are good partners in bringing together stakeholders and defining possible future mitigation measures.

#### **1.3.7 Science**

Negative effects of anthropogenic underwater noise on the marine environment have raised increasing interest among scientists since the latter part of the 20th century (Terhune, 1975; Malme et al., 1983, Malme et al., 1986). Over the past few decades, however, there have been increasing concerns of the scientific community especially of shipping and leisure boats that increased the ocean ambient noise in some regions by 12 dB re 1  $\mu$ Pa (Andrew et al., 2002; McDonald et al., 2006; Frisk, 2012).

Scientific studies cover a wide field of underwater noise research. There are e.g. extensive and emerging research highlighting the harmful effects of man-made noise on marine biota but also monitoring and modelling approaches or technical studies which aim to find out the cause of the noise and to develop technical solutions to reduce it. These scientific insights

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are very valuable to the project as they provide reliable insights in the possibilities to reduce URN.

## 2 Stakeholder engagement

During the project, there is contact with stakeholders in different ways. Various events and meetings are planned in order to engage with those stakeholders that are important for the project. This chapter gives an overview of planned meetings and events and the stakeholder mapping is described.

### 2.1 Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB)

As described in chapter 1.1, the Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) is closely involved with the DEMASK project. The SAB will periodically provide advice and guidance to strengthen the project and members of the SAB act as ambassadors for DEMASK and raise awareness for the DEMASK project and its products in their own network, meaning they act as a representative of the project. The Stakeholder Advisory Board can review any deliverable from the DEMASK project prior to publication.

The SAB will meet twice a year during the DEMASK project. The first meeting coincided with the DEMASK kick-off meeting on 3 April 2024.

Next meetings are planned for:

- November 2024
- April/May 2025
- November 2025
- April/May 2026
- November/December 2026

The final meeting of the SAB at the end of 2026 may coincide with a final conference.

### 2.2 Focus group meetings

Three Focus group meetings will be conducted with stakeholders from different sectors. The meetings are held online because participants are from various countries. The goals of these meetings are to discuss their ambitions, needs, limitations and scope in managing underwater noise. Furthermore, we want to investigate their expectations related to developments on the North Sea, which will form valuable input for our scenario studies. By doing this, we ensure that the scenarios will be relevant and based on real expectations.

Focus group meetings are held in May and June 2024 and are organized for stakeholders from the following sectors:

- Policy
- Shipping, Ports and Fisheries
- Offshore renewables

If deemed necessary, an additional Focus group meeting with stakeholders from NGOs and science might be organised after summer 2024.

In preparation for the Focus group session, participants receive a few questions that help them to be prepared for the meeting. These questions are:

1. What are the current developments of human activities on the North Sea?
  - a. Offshore wind development
  - b. Shipping/fishing/recreational intensity
2. What is the time scale of these foreseeable developments?
3. Which scenarios should be investigated?
4. What elements need to be addressed in the scenario development?

After the meeting, a questionnaire is sent to all invited people, including the ones that could not attend. By filling out and sending back the questionnaire, the stakeholders are able to contribute even more to the project and to the outcomes of the Focus Group sessions in particular. The questionnaires are added as appendices. Besides the questionnaire, invited people for the Focus group meetings afterwards receive the presentation slides and a summary of what was discussed.

### 2.3 Round table discussions

Focus group meetings are organized to bring stakeholders from the same sector (policy, shipping, offshore energy) together. However, the project partners in DEMASK also consider to organize a national roundtable discussion per project partner country. This could deliver a lot of valuable insights in addition to the Focus group sessions. Firstly, because the roundtable is held in-person and in the national language of the project partner's country, which creates a different atmosphere than in English and online. Secondly, stakeholders from various sectors will be together around the table, which could lead to interesting discussions and therefore the possibility to obtain a lot of relevant information.

In Germany, a national roundtable on underwater noise and shipping has been organized in November 2023. Due to the high level of participation and the desire for more frequent meetings on specific topics, another intersessional meeting focusing on incentives was organized in June 2024. The next roundtable will take place in September 2024 and will also address the DEMASK project. Information obtained in these roundtable meetings will also be used to further define the scenarios that the project partners will work with in the next parts of the DEMASK project.

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### 3 Communication

Besides the engagement plan, an overview of stakeholders as part of an internal communication plan is developed.

Participants of the Focus group meetings are listed in an Excel-file, so we are able to stay in touch with them throughout the project. The following information is summarized for those stakeholders:

- Name
- Organisation
- E-mail address
- Sector / industry
- Category of stakeholder (Representation / Collaboration / Information)
- Whether the outcomes have been sent
- Whether the questionnaire was returned

The way of interacting with those stakeholders is dependent on the category they belong to (Representation, Collaboration or Information) as described earlier in chapter 1.1. Regardless of the category, all participants during the Focus group session receive the notes of the meeting, the slides presented and an additional questionnaire. The participants are requested to return the filled-out questionnaire so they can deliver additional information to the project.

Regular meeting with the SAB are planned as explained in chapter 2.1. Besides of direct interaction with stakeholders, general communication channels are used meaning that also project stakeholders will be able to view generally shared information such as information on the website, on LinkedIn and the DEMASK newsletters.

## Annex A : Members Stakeholder Advisory Board

| Country | Name                  | Organisation                                      |
|---------|-----------------------|---|
| BE      | Ingrid van Aken       | SPF Santé Publique – FOD Volksgezondheid          |
| BE      | Senne Aertbeliën      | SPF Santé Publique – FOD Volksgezondheid          |
| DE      | Susanne Schorcht      | Skyborn renewables                                |
| DE      | Bettina Taylor        | BUND für Umwelt und Naturschutz                   |
| DE      | Carolin Abromeit      | Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency          |
| DE      | Jörg Mehldau          | VSM, also CESA                                    |
| DE      | Manfred Lebmeier      | Hamburg Port Authority                            |
| DK      | Jakob Tougaard        | Aarhus University                                 |
| DK      | Kim Lundgreen         | Danish Ministry of Environment                    |
| EU      | Peter Racz            | Interreg North Sea                                |
| FR      | Eric Baudin           | Bureau Veritas                                    |
| HELCOM  | Marta Ruiz            | HELCOM  |
| IE      | Gerry Sutton          | MarEI   |
| INT     | Chris Waddington      | ICS, International Chamber of Shipping            |
| INT     | Kateryna Urbanovych   | NSAC, North Sea Advisory Council                  |
| INT     | Zaan Olivier          | IFAW International Fund for Animal Welfare        |
| NL      | Diede Streng          | RVO   |
| NL      | Frans Hendrik Lafeber | Marin   |
| NL      | Ilse van de Velde     | Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat       |
| NL      | Imke Deibel           | Port of Rotterdam                                 |
| NL      | Johan Bosschers       | Marin   |
| NL      | Niels Hintzen         | Pelagic Trawler Freezer Association               |
| NL      | Tim Heddema           | Pelagic Trawler Freezer Association               |
| NL      | Tina Kelder           | Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat       |
| NO      | Eva Degré             | Norwegian Environment Agency<br>PL Sea Management |
| NO      | Petter Kvadsheim      | FFI   |
| OSPAR   | Franziska Bils        | OSPAR   |
| SE      | Erland Letteval       | Swedish Transport Agency                          |
| SE      | Lars Åkesson          | SWAM  |
| UK      | Elaine Tait           | Marine Scotland                                   |