

Agenda Item 13

National Reporting

Document 13.a rev.1

**2012 Annual National Report
Belgium**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Belgium



**NOTE:
DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS
TO THE MEETING**

2012 ASCOBANS Annual National Reports

This format for the ASCOBANS Annual National Reports was endorsed by the 6th Meeting of the Parties in 2009. Reports are due to be submitted to the Secretariat by 31 March of each year.

Parties are requested to use this report to provide NEW information on measures taken or actions towards meeting the objectives of the Conservation and Management Plan and the Resolutions of the Meeting of the Parties.

The 7th Meeting of the Parties in 2012 agreed to move to online reporting with immediate effect. In order to benefit fully from the opportunities for synergies among CMS Family treaties afforded by this tool, Parties decided that a revised national report format be developed by a small working group assisted by the Secretariat for consideration by the Advisory Committee in preparation for the 8th Meeting of the Parties. While retaining the questions related only to ASCOBANS, it should align more closely to the format used in CMS, AEWA and EUROBATS.

General Information

Name of Party

> Belgium

Report submitted by

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Changes

Changes in Coordinating Authority or appointed Member of the Advisory Committee

> Contact person in the coordinating authority is Sophie Mirgaux

List of National Institutions

List of national authorities, organizations, research centres and rescue centres active in the field of study and conservation of cetaceans, including contact details

> Public Service Public Health, Food Chain safety and Environment)

(Frederic Chemay, Sophie Mirgaux, Geert Raeymaekers)

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Contact: J.Haelters@mumm.ac.be

> University of Liège (ULg)

Dept. of Veterinary Pathology

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Contact: Thierry Jauniaux, T.Jauniaux@ulg.ac.be

> Research Institute for Nature and Forest

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Contact: Eric.Stienen@inbo.be

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Habitat Conservation and Management

Fisheries Interactions

Direct Interaction with Fisheries

1.1 Investigations of methods to reduce bycatch

> None

1.2 Implementation of methods to reduce bycatch

> No additional concrete measures were taken to reduce bycatch.

1.3 Other relevant information

Other relevant information, including bycatch information from opportunistic sources

> Bycatch in recreational fisheries was the subject of a question to Belgium from the European Commission, DG ENV (15 June 2012; ENV.A.1/MV/ts).

Bycatch in recreational beach fisheries was also the subject of discussions in the Flemish parliament and in several coastal communities.

1.4 Report under EC Regulation 812/2004

Please provide the link to your country's report under EC Regulation 812/2004.

> Attached

Reduction of Disturbance

2.1 Anthropogenic Noise

Please reference and briefly summarise any studies undertaken

> To assess the impact of pile driving for the construction of the C-Power offshore wind farm (Thorntonbank, Belgian waters) on the spatial and temporal distribution of harbour porpoises, passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) was combined with aerial surveys. At the end of March 2011, just before construction activities started, aerial surveys yielded an estimate of on average 2.5 harbour porpoises/km² in Belgian waters. Density estimates in mid April 2011, after the start of the construction (piling) activities, had fallen to 1.3 animals/km². Although a decreasing density in Belgian waters towards the end of April should be considered as normal (cf. seasonal migration), changes in the spatial distribution between pre-and post-piling suggested harbour porpoise disturbance. PAM showed a clear fine-scale match between acoustic harbour porpoise detections and piling activities. Immediately upon the start of piling activities, harbour porpoise detections at a few km from the piling site fell to virtually zero. After the cessation of piling it took hours to days before new detections were made at this location. Aerial surveys allowed quantifying the distance over which an apparent impact occurred at around 22 km, with a repopulation of part of the area observed after one day with no piling.

The results of the 2011 marine mammal monitoring in the framework of offshore windfarm construction and operation, can be found in:

Degraer, S., Brabant, R. & Rumes, B. (Eds.), 2012. Offshore windfarms in the Belgian part of the North Sea: heading for an understanding of environmental impacts. Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Department MUMM.

Haelters, J., Van Roy, W., Vigin, L. & Degraer, S., 2012. The effect of pile driving on harbour porpoises in Belgian waters. In: S. Degraer, R. Brabant & B. Rumes (Eds.). Offshore windfarms in the Belgian part of the North Sea: heading for an understanding of environmental impacts. Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Department MUMM, Chapter 9: 127-143.

Norro, A., Rumes, B. & Degraer, S., 2012. Differentiating between underwater construction noise of monopile and jacket foundation wind turbines: a case study from the Belgian part of the North Sea. In: S. Degraer, R. Brabant & B. Rumes (Eds.). Offshore windfarms in the Belgian part of the North Sea: heading for an understanding of environmental impacts. Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Department MUMM, Chapter 10: 145-155.

These results are available at www.mumm.ac.be, and were presented at different meetings: ICES Annual Science Conference, Bergen, Norway, 17-21 September 2012; the Offshore Wind and Ecology Congress (OWEZ), Amsterdam, 11-12 October 2012; the symposium "Protecting the Dutch whale - crossing boundaries", Amsterdam, 18 October 2012.

Further studies are planned, a.o. of the impact of the piling for another wind farm starting in spring 2013.

2.2 Ship Strike Incidents

Please list all known incidents and provide information separately for each

	Incident 1	Incident 2	Incident 3	Incident 4	Incident 5
Date	None				
Species					
Type of Injury					
Fatal Injury (Yes/No)					
Type of Vessel (length, tonnage, speed)					
Location (coordinates)					
More Information (name, email)					

2.3 Major Incidents

Major Incidents Affecting Significant Numbers of Cetaceans (two or more animals)

	Incident 1	Incident 2	Incident 3	Incident 4	Incident 5
Date	none				
Location					
Type of Incident					
Further Information					

2.4 Pollution and Hazardous Substances

Please report on main types of pollution and hazardous substances (including source, location and observed effects on cetaceans). Please provide information on any new measures taken to reduce pollution likely to have an impact.

> No specific effects on small cetaceans washed ashore at the Belgian coast were investigated, although from selected stranded animals tissue samples were taken for further investigation of pollutant loads.

The FOD Public Health, Food Safety and Environment, DG Environment, Marine Environment organises a new fishing for litter project.

2.5 Other Forms of Disturbance

Please provide any other relevant information, e.g. relating to recreational activities affecting cetaceans.

> The impact of military activities on the marine environment, including on marine mammals, was discussed.

Degraer, S., W. Courtens, J. Derweduwen, J. Haelters, K. Hostens, E. Stienen, S. Vandendriessche (2011). Discussienota structureel overleg Dienst Marien Milieu – Defensie. Eindrapport in opdracht van de Federale Overheidsdienst Volksgezondheid, Veiligheid van de Voedselketen en Leefmilieu, Directoraat-generaal Leefmilieu. Brussel, België. 51 pp.

Marine Protected Areas

Marine Protected Areas for Small Cetaceans

3.1 Relevant Information

Please provide any relevant information on measures taken to identify, implement and manage protected areas for cetaceans, including MPAs designated under the Habitats Directive and MPAs planned or established within the framework of OSPAR or HELCOM.

> Through Royal Decree of 16 October 2012 (Official Journal 5 November 2012) a new Natura 2000 area was designated. Although established not specifically for cetaceans, the Habitats Directive requires protection measures for Annex II species if they occur in relevant numbers in the area (which is the case). At this moment, such measures are yet to be implemented.

3.2 GIS Data

Please indicate where GIS data of the boundaries (and zoning, if applicable) can be obtained (contact email / website).

> l.vigin@mumm.ac.be

Surveys and Research

4.1 Abundance, Distribution, Population Structure

Overview of Research on Abundance, Distribution and Population Structure

> The estimate of the average density of harbour porpoise (aerial surveys) in Belgian waters in 2012 was 1.6 animals per km² in March and 0.5 animals per km² in October.

> Besides of harbour porpoises, regular sightings were made of mostly small groups of white-beaked dolphins (3 to 6 animals). Two sightings however (in January 2012) concerned 20 to 30 animals.

> A sperm whale washed ashore in February. A piece of plastic was found in its stomach, but this was not considered as having caused the death of the animal (Rumes, B. & Haelters, J., 2012. Een verdwaalde potvis op het strand. Hippocampus 2012 (3-4): 14-15).

4.2 Technological Developments

New Technological Developments

> No new information.

4.3 Other Relevant Research

> In the implementation of part of the North Sea Conservation Plan, the FOD Public Health, Food Safety and Environment, DG Environment, Marine Environment, funded a short-term project (2011-2012, 3 months) on the investigation of the diet (using stomach contents) of harbour porpoises stranded in Belgium.

Haelters, J., Kerckhof, F., Toussaint, E., Jauniaux, T. & Degraer, S., 2012. The diet of harbour porpoises bycaught or washed ashore in Belgium, and relationship with relevant data from the strandings database. Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS/MUMM). Report commissioned by the Federal Public Service for Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (Marine Environment), Brussels, 45 p.

Use of Bycatches and Strandings

Post-Mortem Research Schemes

5.1 Contact Details

Contact details of research institutions and focal point

> MUMM

ULg

(see general information)

5.2 Methodology

Methodology used (reference, e.g. publication, protocol)

> No new information since 2009

5.3 Samples

Collection of samples (type, preservation method)

> See strandings protocol; references in previous reports.

5.4 Database

Database (number of data sets by species, years covered, software used, online access)

> All sightings and strandings are taken up in a database, partly online on www.mumm.ac.be. Tissues are recorded in a tissue database (not online yet).

> The total number of washed ashore (dead) harbour porpoises in 2012 was 97. Detailed data are not available yet, but at least 15 harbour porpoises had died due to bycatch in fishing gear. A large proportion of the stranded animals was in a condition not allowing to draw conclusions about the cause of death. Recreational set net fisheries on the beach were the source of part of the bycatch.

> The cause of death of a sperm whale was related to the stranding (live stranded)

5.5 Additional Information

Additional information (e.g. website addresses, intellectual property rights, possibility of a central database)

> An up to then undocumented cause of death for harbour porpoises was described on the basis of two animals washed ashore in September 2011: predation by grey seals.

Haelters, J., Kerckhof, F., Jauniaux, T. & Degraer, S., 2012. The grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) as a predator of harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*)? *Aquatic Mammals* 38(4): 343-353. DOI 10.1578/AM.38.4.2012.343

> Necropsy workshop

An international necropsy workshop was organized (6th Cetacean Necropsy Workshop: special issue on cetaceans inner ear, including beaked whales) at the university of Liège. A number of harbour porpoises were autopsied. The main issue was the dissection of the inner ear and a demonstration of the skull morphology of cetaceans.

> Publications/posters on the results of research:

Begeman L., St. Leger J., Blyde D.J., Jauniaux T., Lair S., Lovewell G., Raverty S., Seibel H., Siebert U., Staggs S., Martelli P., Keesler R. Intestinal volvulus in cetaceans, *Veterinary Pathology*, DOI: 10.1177/0300985812465327.

Jauniaux T., Brenez C., Fretin D., Godfroid J., Haelters J., Jacques T., Kerckhof F., Mast J., Sarlet M., Coignoul F. *Brucella ceti* infection in a harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*), *Proceedings of the 2nd Scientific meeting of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Liège, 19 October 2012*, p. 46.

Godfroid J., Nymo I., Tryland M., Cloeckaert A., Jauniaux T., Whatmore A., Moreno E., Foster G. *Brucella ceti* and *Brucella pinnipedialis* infections in marine mammals, in: *New directions in conservation medicine applied cases of ecological health*, Aguirre, A., Ostfeld, R., Daszak, P. (Eds.), Oxford University Press, 2012.

Activities and Results

5.6 Necropsies

Number of necropsies carried out in the reporting period

	Number	Recorded cause of death
<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	50+	The total number of washed ashore (dead) harbour porpoises in 2012 was 97. Detailed data are not available yet, but at least 15 harbour porpoises had died due to bycatch in fishing gear. A large proportion of the stranded animals was in a condition not allowing to draw conclusions about the cause of death. Recreational set net fisheries on the beach were the source of part of the bycatch.
<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>		
<i>Delphinus delphis</i>		
<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>		
<i>Grampus griseus</i>		
<i>Globicephala melas</i>		
<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>		
<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>		
<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>		
<i>Orcinus orca</i>		
<i>Hyperoodon ampullatus</i>		
<i>Mesoplodon bidens</i>		
<i>Kogia breviceps</i>		
Other (please specify under number)	1 <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Stranding
Other (please specify under number)		
Other (please specify under number)		
Other (please specify under number)		
Other (please specify under number)		
Other (please specify under number)		

Relevant New Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines

6.1 New Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines

Please provide any relevant information

> Implementation of the 2012 obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (including sections on marine mammals; initial assessment, identification of good environmental status and setting of objectives):

Belgische Staat, 2012. Initiële Beoordeling voor de Belgische mariene wateren. Kaderrichtlijn Mariene Strategie – Art 8 lid 1a & 1b. BMM, Federale Overheidsdienst Volksgezondheid, Veiligheid van de Voedselketen en Leefmilieu, Brussel, België, 81 pp.

Belgische Staat, 2012. Omschrijving van Goede Milieutoestand en vaststelling van Milieudoelen voor de Belgische mariene wateren. Kaderrichtlijn Mariene Strategie – Art 9 & 10. BMM, Federale Overheidsdienst Volksgezondheid, Veiligheid van de Voedselketen en Leefmilieu, Brussel, België, 34 pp.

Public Awareness and Education

7.1 Public Awareness and Education

Please report on any public awareness and education activities to implement or promote the Agreement to the general public and to fishermen.

> Exhibition on whales and dolphins

The exhibit Quand les baleines se trompent de route ran from February 2012 to February 2013 at the Aquarium-Museum of the University of Liège and drew 89.000 visitors.

> General brochures on marine environmental protection:

DG Leefmilieu, 2012. Belgische Noordzee - Levend water! Biodiversiteit en Natura 2000 in het Belgische deel van de Noordzee. Federale Overheidsdienst Volksgezondheid, Veiligheid van de Voedselketen en Leefmilieu, Brussel, België, 40 pp.

DG Leefmilieu, 2012. Een mariene strategie voor de Noordzee. Federale Overheidsdienst Volksgezondheid, Veiligheid van de Voedselketen en Leefmilieu, Brussel, België, 32 pp.

These brochures exist in Dutch and French and can be downloaded from the website www.de-noordzee.be.

> Web based initiatives

Two initiatives towards the public to record, report and distribute marine mammal sightings continue:

www.waarnemingen.be is an initiative of Natuurpunt Studie vzw and Stichting Natuurinformatie that collects from volunteers records of observations of species of different taxonomic groups, including cetaceans.

www.zeezoogdieren.org is an ongoing initiative by Frank Wagemans (Natuurpunt vzw) and Jaap van der Hiele (EHBZ Zuidwest) that gives ad hoc information of noteworthy facts of marine mammals from Dutch and Belgian waters.

Besides that, MUMM manages an online database on strandings and selected sighting records: www.mumm.ac.be.

Possible difficulties encountered in implementing the Agreement

Difficulties in Implementing the Agreement

Please provide any relevant information

> The division of competences in Belgium between the federal government (environment) and the Flemish government (fisheries) makes implementation of some aspects of the ACOBANS commitments a challenge.