

**Proposal for a reporting form for HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on
Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area for countries which are
non-parties to ASCOBANS**

Note from Poland

At the last meeting of a HELCOM group on monitoring and nature conservation HELCOM STATE&CONSERVATION 3/2015 in November 2015, the problem of reporting on implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea was discussed.

One aspect of the issue is reporting from countries which are non-parties to ASCOBANS (HELCOM have prepared the reporting format for these countries - in the attachment to this e-mail). Another issue is reporting to HELCOM from countries which are members to ASCOBANS.

When discussing this at HELCOM STATE & CONSERVATION 3/2015 it was stated that it would be very useful to use directly chosen information from ASCOBANS reports for the purposes of reporting on HELCOM Recommendation 17/2. The issue of the reporting for Rec.17/2 will be also simultaneously discussed at the HELCOM STATE&CONSERVATION 4/2016 meeting from 11-15 of April 2016 (background information attached).

The feedback of the Jastarnia Group on how to streamline the reporting for the purposes of HELCOM Rec. 17/2 and ASCOBANS will be most welcome.

HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 17/2

Adopted 12 March 1996 and revised 6 March 2013, having regard to Article 13, Paragraph b) of the Helsinki Convention

PROTECTION OF HARBOUR PORPOISE IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA

THE COMMISSION,

DEEPLY CONCERNED about the population status of harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea and **AWARE** that individual numbers have drastically decreased,

RECOGNIZING the relevance of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), including the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), as well as the action list and relevant recommendations by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and the resolutions of International Whaling Commission (IWC) and European Cetacean Society (ECS),

RECOGNIZING that harbour porpoise is and should remain an integral part of the marine ecosystems,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that by-catches, habitat deterioration and disturbance adversely affect this species,

CONVINCED that the critical status of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea calls for immediate actions in order to safeguard their survival. The progressive, critical threat of extinction of the harbour porpoise in the Baltic proper (ICES areas 24-32) and apparent decline in numbers in other parts of the Baltic Sea region (such as ICES area 21-23) requires immediate action and, in the case of ICES area 24-32 emergency action, to ensure their survival.

RECOMMENDS that the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

- a) give highest priority to avoiding by-catches of harbour porpoises, particularly following the recommendations of ASCOBANS and the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan, in order to achieve the ecological objective of the Baltic Sea Action Plan: "By 2015 by-catch of harbour porpoise, seals, water birds and non-target fish species has been significantly reduced with the aim to reach by-catch rates close to zero";
- b) take action in close co-operation with ASCOBANS and ICES, for collection and analysis of additional data on population distribution and abundance, stock identities, behavior and threats such as by-catch mortality, underwater noise, pollutant levels, ship strikes, changes in food base, epizooties, climate changes, marine installations and construction;
- c) consider the establishment of marine protected areas for harbour porpoises within the framework of the Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs), when documented information is available that an area hosts harbour porpoises;
- d) report to the Commission every three years, beginning from 1998 on their progress in implementing the above recommendations.



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
4-2016, 3J-2

Schwerin, Germany, 11-15 April, 2016

Document title	Proposal for a reporting form for HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area for countries which are non-parties to ASCOBANS after the amendments provided by SEAL 9-2015
Code	3J-2
Category	CMNT
Agenda Item	Agenda Item 3J – Follow up of HELCOM agreements and activities
Submission date	16.3.2016
Submitted by	Poland
Reference	paragraph 7.7 from the Outcome of the HELCOM SEAL 9-2015

Background

During the third meeting of the State and Conservation Working Group which took place in Helsinki from 9-13 of November 2015, the Contracting Parties have discussed the reporting form for implementation of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 *on Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area*. The discussion took place on a basis of the document 3J-6 (ASCOBANS¹ Annual National Reports on the protection of small cetaceans and in particular harbor porpoise – par. 3J-6 of the outcome of the STATE&CONSERVATION 3-2015). It was stated, that Baltic countries which are parties to ASCOBANS should not be requested to report on protection of harbor porpoise twice for ASCOBANS and HELCOM separately, however taking into account that the ASCOBANS report requires much more information comparing to what is required under the Recommendation 17/2, it may still be necessary to develop a HELCOM reporting form into which specific components of the reporting to ASCOBANS could be inserted.

For the Baltic countries which are non-members to ASCOBANS (Estonia, Latvia, Russia) separate reporting procedure should be organized, as they are not able to provide such detailed information on protection of harbor porpoise in their countries as parties which are members to ASCOBANS. Thus the proposal for preparation of a separate, simplified, reporting form for non-parties to ASCOBANS should be discussed, as well as the reporting procedure.

According to the decision 3J-7 from the STATE&CONSERVATION 3-2015, The Meeting invited SEAL 9-2015 to discuss how to organize reporting for the countries that are non-parties to ASCOBANS and welcomed the offer from Poland to develop a draft HELCOM reporting form and submit it to SEAL 9-2015 for their consideration.

In December 2015, the SEAL 9-2015 considered the proposal for a reporting form for HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 for countries that are non-parties to ASCOBANS (Estonia, Latvia and Russia), submitted by Poland, Lead Country for the Recommendation, and suggested the following amendments/edits to the form:

- to include information on the by caught individuals, including total length and sex (for e.g. demographic purposes);
- to only include harbour porpoise in the field 'species';
- include 'number of by caught animals' instead of 'estimated number of by caught animals' (as estimates for incidental catch are hard to obtain),
- to clarify what kind of effort data is needed
- change 'party' to 'Contracting Party'

¹ ASCOBANS - Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas

Furthermore, the HELCOM SEAL 9-2015 invited Poland to consider the proposed changes and submit the updated reporting form to STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016.

The proposal of a draft simplified reporting form for HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 after the amendments according to the suggestions of the SEAL 9-2015 meeting, is attached to this document.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- comment of the draft simplified reporting form for HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 for non-parties to ASCOBANS after the amendments provided according to the suggestions of HELCOM SEAL 9-2015;
- discuss further steps towards the adoption of the draft reporting form for Recommendation 17/2 for non-parties to ASCOBANS;
- discuss the reporting procedure for Recommendation 17/2 from non-parties to ASCOBANS.

**Draft National Report on implementation of HELCOM
Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbour porpoise
in the Baltic Sea Area**

A. General information

Name of Contracting party	Period covered
Name of report compiler	Date of report

B. Information on new activities concerning minimization of threats on porpoises and measures for their protection

1. Reduction of by-catch

Investigations of methods to reduce by-catch
Implementation of methods to reduce by-catch

Estimates of by-catch in set net fisheries			
Harbour porpoise sex/total length	Number of by-caught animals	Area (ICES area or more detailed)	Notes (type of fishery, effort (net length/soak time), seasonal variations, etc.)

2. Reduction of disturbance to harbour porpoises

<p>Information on levels of disturbance (e.g. seismic surveys, new high-speed ferry routes, studies about acoustic impacts on porpoises, marine installations and construction etc.)</p>
<p>Implementation of guidelines, new legislation, etc. to reduce disturbance</p>

3. Protected areas for small cetaceans

Measures taken to identify, implement and manage protected areas
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4. Further research on small cetaceans

Research on distribution, abundance and population structure of harbor porpoises
Collection of information on stranded porpoises
Research on impacts of pollutant levels