

Jastarnia Plan Progress Report



Summary of Progress in the Implementation of the Recovery Plan

Qualitative Assessment of Progress in the Implementation of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Recovery Plan for HP (update Aug 2018)												
na = non applicable; -1, situation is less good than at the adoption of the plan in 2009, 0 = no progress, 1 = small progress or at experimental level; 2, steady progress; 3, fully implemented.												
Actions from the Jastarnia Recovery Plan for HP		Priority	SE	DK	DE	PL	FI	LI	LA	ES	RU	
1	Implementation of the CP: co-ordinator and Steering Committee	High	Co-ordinator for 2018									
2	Increase involvement, awareness and cooperation	High	1	1	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	
3	Monitor and estimate abundance and distribution	High	Large scale	SAMBAH II planned								
			Reg/survey	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
			Reg/modelling	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch	High	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
5	Monitor and mitigate impact of underwater noise	High	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	
6	Monitoring and assess population health status	Medium	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	
7	Investigate habitat use and protect important areas	Medium	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report



Priority Recommendations

- Immediately implement mitigation measures to minimise bycatch in the entire area, especially in protected areas but also in the rest of the Baltic Proper
- Investigate options for more cost-effective bycatch monitoring to better estimate bycatch, particularly targeting high risk fisheries
- Implement proper management of protected areas for porpoises
- Undertake SAMBAH II to improve estimates of abundance and distribution
- Increase public awareness, especially in countries where there is little or no engagement



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report – Action 1



Action 1: *Increase involvement, awareness and cooperation*

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Public awareness initiatives & collaborations with stakeholders have shown variable progress between countries; particularly weak for countries in eastern Baltic where porpoises not recognised as part of the native fauna*
- *Efforts to improve awareness of the presence of the species, its conservation status and threats should be made as a priority across the region.*



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report – Action 2



Action 2: Monitor and estimate abundance and distribution

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *First abundance estimate (2011-13) for entire Baltic Proper indicates population of c. 500 porpoises, although with wide confidence limits*
- *The greatest concentration is off SE Sweden around Hoburgs and Northern and Southern Mid-Sea banks although clear that the species also occurs in the Bothnian Bay in the northern Baltic*
- *In summer, the population in the Baltic Proper separated from the one in the Belt Sea, but in winter there is some mixing in the Western Baltic*
- *Inevitably, little genetic sampling of animals in the eastern Baltic nor comparison with historical samples for further elucidation of this population*
- *Acoustic monitoring continues mainly in western parts of the Baltic. These should continue and be extended eastwards. A new SAMBAH II project should be supported.*



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report – Action 3



Action 3: Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Huge differences exist between countries in the Baltic in funding for monitoring, estimating and mitigating bycatch, as well as in how fisheries are regulated and by whom. Each country should present an assessment of how they see their gillnet fishery from a conservation standpoint, the potential for alternative gear and other mitigation measures*
- *Special attention should be given to ICES Sub-Areas 25 & 26 which include the main mating & calving grounds for the Baltic porpoise population, extending perhaps to Sub-Areas 27 and 28.2.*
- *The extent & methods of recording fishing effort and cetacean bycatch need improving, and most importantly, mitigation actions taken, starting immediately*
- *Fishers & their organisations should be encouraged at a much larger scale to explore alternatives to gillnets, and to resolve whether pingers & other alerting devices are effective mitigation measures without unintended population-level consequences*
- *Increased cooperation with fishers might help reduce potential bycatch, with particular attention to recreational fishermen using gillnets. Currently, poor documentation of the magnitude of gillnet fishing by recreational fishermen.*



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report – Action 4



Action 4: Monitor and mitigate impact of underwater noise

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Through the BIAS Project and the work of HELCOM, much attention on assessment & monitoring of noise, particularly the MSFD continuous low frequency sound indicator. Some of the listening stations in 6 countries have been maintained but full coverage of the Baltic Proper with listening stations would be beneficial*
- *A few countries have contributed information on impulsive noise events to MSFD noise register. This needs to be extended across all Range States.*



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report – Action 5



Action 5: Monitor and assess population status

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Monitoring & assessing population status challenging for a population so rare over large parts of the Baltic Proper, so all lines of evidence should be utilised, including acoustics, opportunistic sightings, & strandings with life history information derived from dead animals*
- *Only Germany has a dedicated stranding scheme with good samples of animals necropsied. All other countries need to do more to maximise opportunities for data on porpoises. This should be done in combination with a public awareness and education campaign. In this context, the perceived status of Baltic porpoises in national Red Data lists for most countries could usefully be updated.*



Jastarnia Plan Progress Report – Action 6



Action 6: Investigate habitat use and protect important areas

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *In recent years, particularly with benefit of the results of the SAMBAH Project, attention has been paid to the establishment of protected areas for harbour porpoise. Sweden in particular has key areas designated although these could usefully be extended, for example to include Polish waters adjacent to the protected area offshore of SE Sweden*
- *All Baltic Sea countries need to consider whether there is scope for greater protection within their EEZs. The establishment of Ecologically and Biologically Sensitive Areas (EBSAs) in other parts of the Baltic, if accompanied by protective measures, could help provide the conditions for porpoise habitat to be restored, facilitating recovery of the population particularly in the eastern and northern portions of the Baltic.*





WBBK Plan Progress Report

Summary of Progress in Implementation of the Plan

Qualitative Assessment of Progress in the implementation of the ASCOBANS WBBK Conservation Plan for HP (update Aug 2018)						
Actions from the WBBK Conservation Plan for HP		Priority	SE	DK	DE	
1	Implementation of the CP: co-ordinator and Steering Committee	High	Co-ordinator for 2018			
2	Actively seek to involve fishermen in the implementation of the plan and in mitigation measures to ensure a reduction in bycatch	High	1	1	2	
3	Cooperate and inform other relevant bodies about the conservation plan	High	0	0	0	
4	Protect harbour porpoises in their key habitats by minimizing bycatch	High	1	1	1	
5	Implement pinger use in fisheries causing bycatch	High	1	2	2	
6	Replacement of high risk gillnets with alternative gear	High	1	0	1	
7	Estimate total annual bycatch	High	0	1	0	
8	Estimate trends in abundance in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and Kattegat	High	Large scale	SCANS III undertaken in 2016		
			Reg/survey	0	SACs	2
			Reg/modelling	0	1	2
9	Monitoring population health status, contaminant load and causes of mortality	Medium	1	0	2	
10	Ensure non-detrimental use of pingers by examining habitat exclusion and long-term effects of pingers	Medium	1	1	1	
11	Include monitoring & management of important prey species in national HP management plans	Medium	0	2	1	
12	Restore or maintain habitat quality	Medium	1	1	1	

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WBBK Plan Progress Report



Priority Recommendations

- Monitor and estimate bycatch. Specifically estimate total annual bycatch
- Set up stranding/reporting schemes and collection of stranded/bycaught animals in Denmark so that the number of necropsies can be increased
- Put in place guidelines for underwater noise in the entire WBBK and Jastarnia areas, similar to those existing in the German North Sea
- Continue studies to examine habitat exclusion and long-term effects of pinger deployments
- Continue surveys and monitoring of abundance and trends



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Actions 1 & 2



Action 1: *Actively seek to involve fishermen in the implementation of the plan and in mitigation measures to ensure a reduction in bycatch*

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *All three Range States actively engaged in collaborative projects with fishermen but always scope to do more. Denmark has had a long history of working with fishermen on pinger deployment and over the last six years, with remote electronic monitoring. Such measures could be applied more widely with good effect through the region*

Action 2: *Cooperate and inform other relevant bodies about the conservation plan*

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Germany has long history of working with stakeholders & the general public on conservation issues. There have been similar schemes in Denmark and Sweden mainly at a local level, but the NGO movement is less developed. Efforts should be made to address this in those countries, particularly with respect to citizen science projects.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 3



Action 3: Protect harbour porpoises in their key habitats by minimizing bycatch as far as possible

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Several Natura 2000 sites now exist in Western Baltic, Belt Sea & Kattegat*
- *Next step is to develop management plans for each and ensure adequate regular monitoring of porpoises in and around those areas plus mitigation measures to minimise adverse effects of human activities such as fisheries and noise disturbance.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 4



Action 4: *Implement pinger use in fisheries causing bycatch*

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Pingers are deployed in static gillnet fisheries by the fleets of all three Range States. However, compliance is not fully checked or enforced throughout the region, and in Swedish waters in particular, may not be implemented. There is a clear need to tighten up on regulations, followed by enforcement in those situation where such mitigation measures are recommended*
- *The German PAL system needs further investigation to determine to what extent it functions as an alerting rather than deterrent device, and to establish its potential in different situations. A scientific monitoring scheme should be implemented as soon as possible.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 5



Action 5: Where possible, replace gillnet fisheries known to be associated with high porpoise bycatch with alternative fishing gear known to be less harmful

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Studies started in all three countries to find alternative fishing methods that are less harmful to marine wildlife including porpoises. These should be strongly encouraged, and knowledge gained shared widely in a prompt manner across the fishing industry and other marine stakeholders.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 6



Action 6: Estimate total annual bycatch

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Dedicated monitoring of marine mammal bycatch not undertaken in any of the Range States, covering a sufficient part of the fleet of higher risk fisheries to arrive at reliable estimates.*
- *Reliance upon EU Data Collection Framework risks seriously under recording porpoise bycatch. REM may be more effective but has not been developed sufficiently in a cost-effective manner for wide application. Until all these issues addressed, an assessment of true level of bycatch in the region will not be realised.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 7



Action 7: Estimate trends in abundance of harbour porpoises in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *SCANS III survey in July 2016 has provided abundance estimate of around 42,000 porpoises for the WBBK management unit. There is a proposal to repeat a survey of the area in summer 2020 to better establish a trend for this population.*
- *No attempt made yet to visually monitor seasonal variation in abundance or from year to year. Acoustic monitoring provides some measure of this but has been patchy in space and time. Monitoring, both visual and acoustic, should be extended to fill those gaps. Coverage could usefully be raised to the level currently undertaken by countries in the southern North Sea.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 8



Action 8: Monitoring population health status, contaminant load and causes of mortality

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *There needs to be a well-developed stranding reporting scheme with regular necropsies undertaken of a reasonable sample size. Germany has such a scheme and performs necropsies on a routine basis. However, neither Sweden nor Denmark have well-established stranding schemes, although Sweden does perform necropsies on a sample of stranded animals*
- *There is a need to establish a more comprehensive stranding reporting scheme in those countries, particularly Denmark, for routine necropsies.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 9



Action 9: Ensure a non-detrimental use of pingers by examining habitat exclusion and long-term effects of pingers

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Scientists from the Range States have led much of the research undertaken to date on the interactions between porpoises and pingers. The main objective is to ensure that with pinger deployment, porpoises are alerted to the presence of a net in a manner that avoids entanglement whilst not excluding animals from important habitat for significant periods resulting in a population impact*
- *Studies continue to investigate the efficacy of this potential mitigation measure. These should be encouraged. Alternatives such as the PAL system developed in Germany need further testing to establish whether or not they are more effective.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 10



Action 10: Include monitoring and management of important prey species in national harbour porpoise management plans

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Recent studies have provided insight into the diet of porpoises in the region, illustrating the importance of cod & herring for adults whilst juveniles also consumed a significant quantity of gobies. Both cod and herring stocks have declined in the Skagerrak, Kattegat & Belt Seas but cod populations are showing some signs of recovery in the Western Baltic*
- *Trends in the stocks of these important prey species could potentially affect porpoise reproductive rates and possibly also survival rates. It is recommended that studies investigate in more detail predator-prey interactions at an ecosystem level.*



WBBK Plan Progress Report – Action 11



Action 11: Restore or maintain habitat quality

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

- *Underwater noise has potential to be an important human stressor affecting porpoises and their habitat. Under the MSFD, countries are obliged to monitor both continuous noise as produced by shipping, and impulsive noise from sources such as seismic, sonar, pile driving, seal scarers, and explosions*
- *Some monitoring has started in the WBBK area, although there is still more to be done before one can establish that the region is in good environmental status.*

