

Agenda Item 2

Review of New Information on Threats to  
Small Cetaceans (reporting cycle 2017 only)

Document 2.e

**2017 Annual National Report:  
Belgium**

Action Requested

- Take note

Submitted by

Belgium



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

## **Secretariat's Note**

The Rules of Procedure adopted at the ASCOBANS 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Parties remain in force until and unless an amendment is called for and adopted.

## **NATIONAL REPORTING FORMAT FOR ASCOBANS**

1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY – 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2017

As outlined in ASCOBANS [RESOLUTION 8.1](#) on National Reporting, the national reports covering the year 2017 will cover the following sections of the Annex to the Resolution, in addition to the standard sections I and VII:

- bycatch (section II A1)
- resource depletion (section II A2)
- marine debris (section II C9)
- surveys and research (section III)
- use of bycatches and strandings (section IV).

The reports submitted will inform discussions at the 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee, which will be held in September 2018 and will tailor its agenda to focus on the topics selected for this national report.

Date: 7-Jun-18

**SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

Party Information

<b>A. Name of Party</b>	Belgium
<b>B. Details of National Coordinator (Focal Point) for ASCOBANS</b>	Sophie Mirgaux
	Function
	DG Environment
	Victor Hortaplein 40/10, B-1060 Brussels
	+32 2 524 95 20
	sophie.mirgaux@milieu.belgie.be
<b>C. Details of Delegates (contributors to the report)</b> <i>(For each, mention Name, Function, Organization, Postal Address, Telephone, Email)</i>	Jan Haelters Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), OD Nature – MUMM, 3de en 23ste Linieregimentsplein, B-8400 Oostende, Belgium tel.: +32(0)59.70.01.31 <a href="mailto:jhaelters@naturalsciences.be">jhaelters@naturalsciences.be</a>
	Bob Rumes RBINS
	Francis Kerckhof RBINS
	Thierry Jauniaux ULg
<b>D. List of relevant national institutions</b> <i>(List of national authorities, organizations, research centres and rescue centres active in the field of study and conservation of cetaceans. For each one mention the name, postal address, contact person, telephone and email address)</i>	RBINS Jan Haelters Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), OD Nature – MUMM, 3de en 23ste Linieregimentsplein, B-8400 Oostende, Belgium tel.: +32(0)59.70.01.31 <a href="mailto:jhaelters@naturalsciences.be">jhaelters@naturalsciences.be</a>
	University of Liège Thierry Jauniaux Département de Pathologie Vétérinaire, Sart Tilman B.43, B-4000 Liège, Belgium <a href="mailto:t.jauniaux@ulg.ac.be">t.jauniaux@ulg.ac.be</a>
	Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) Wandelaarkaai 7, B-8400 Ostend, Belgium <a href="mailto:info@vliz.be">info@vliz.be</a>
<b>E. List of relevant fisheries stakeholders in your country</b> <i>(List of fisheries associations and cooperatives, research centres, relevant private sector entities and other</i>	Vlaamse overheid Jean-François Verhegghen Departement Landbouw en Visserij, Afdeling Kennis, Kwaliteit en Visserij / Dienst Visserij Tel.: +32 50 248 340 Vlaams Administratief Centrum Koning Albert I-laan 1.2 bus 101, B-8200 Brugge

<i>organizations involved in fisheries in waters frequented by cetaceans. For each one mention the name, postal address, contact person, telephone and email address)</i>	ILVO Instituut voor Landbouw en Visserijonderzoek Hans Polet Ankerstraat 1, 8400 Oostende Tel.: +32 59 56 98 75
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**SECTION II: HABITAT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT (THREATS AND PRESSURES ON CETACEANS)**

**A. Fisheries-related Threats**

**1. Bycatch**

<b>a)</b> How is the magnitude of the threat assessed/monitored? <i>(Include percentage where applicable in the adjoining column)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated observer schemes	%
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries observers	%
	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Electronic Monitoring	%
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strandings	100
	<input type="checkbox"/> None	%
<b>b)</b> In the last year, which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch? <i>(Include numbers)</i> <i>Please provide the following information where available:</i> i. <i>Species</i> ii. <i>Number of bycaught animals</i> iii. <i>Gear type</i> iv. <i>ICES area</i> v. <i>Overall sampling effort</i>	<b>White-beaked dolphin: 1, unknown gear type, ICES Area IVc, based on stranding</b>  <b>Harbour porpoise: 8, unknown gear type, ICES Area IVc, based on strandings</b>	
<b>c)</b> In the last year, were there any notable incidents? <i>E.g. mass bycatch incidents, unusual species bycatch etc.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	<b>If you answer is yes, please provide details.</b>  <b>Bowhead whale observation close inshore, entangled, probably in static gear, but alive, swam away</b>
<b>d)</b> Are there any mitigation measures in place?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	<b>If you answer is yes, please provide details.</b>  <b>Ban on the use of gill- and tangle nets in recreational fisheries</b>

<p>e) If yes, what mitigation measures are being used and where? <i>E.g. Acoustic deterrent devices, seasonal closures, gear modifications etc.</i></p>	<p><b>See d); no seasonal closures, gear modifications or obligations for the use of acoustic deterrent devices in place</b></p>	
<p>f) Other relevant information. <i>E.g. provide links to OSPAR reports (FCS and GES being covered already so no need to duplicate), annual bycatch reports (for more detailed information) etc.</i></p>	<p><b>Haelters, J., F. Kerckhof, K. Moreau, M. Potin, M. Doom &amp; T. Jauniaux, 2018. Strandingen en waarnemingen van zeezoogdieren en opmerkelijke vissen in België in 2017 [Strandings and sightings of marine mammals and some remarkable fish species in Belgium in 2017]. Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen (KBIN), Brussel. 30 pp.</b></p> <p><b>Haelters, J., Kerckhof, F., Rumes, B., Potin, M. &amp; Jauniaux, T., 2017. Strandingen en waarnemingen van zeezoogdieren en opmerkelijke vissen in België in 2016 [Strandings and sightings of marine mammals and some remarkable fish species in Belgium in 2016]. Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen (KBIN), Brussel. 30 pp.</b></p> <p><b>National report to the MSFD (in prep.)</b></p>	
<p>g) Relevant new research/work/collaboration on bycatch within the Agreement Area.</p>	<p><b>None</b></p>	
<p><b>2. Resource Depletion</b></p>		
<p>a) Based on the latest stock assessments (carried out in advance of the December Council negotiations), are there any notable depletions of fish species which would be a concern for cetaceans?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If your answer is yes, please provide details:</p> <p><b>See ICES assessments on fish stocks and the results of research into prey preferences of cetacean species</b></p>
<p>b) In Parties' national waters, where are these depletions occurring? <i>By ICES Area</i></p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>	

<p><b>c)</b> What measures are being taken to manage pressures on depleted fish stocks, including relevant regulations/guidelines? <i>E.g. decrease in TAC, recovery plan etc.</i></p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>	
<p><b>d)</b> Is there any evidence within your national waters that resource depletion may be impacting cetaceans (e.g. evidence of starvation)?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If your answer is yes, please provide details: Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
<p><b>e)</b> Are there any national surveys which evaluate cetacean body condition?</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If your answer is yes, please provide details: Strandings network, with a target of 50% of all stranded harbour porpoises collected for further investigation</p>
<p><b>f)</b> Relevant new research/work/collaboration</p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>	
<p><b>B. <u>Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)</u></b> 1. Marine Debris</p>		
<p>a) What monitoring is in place to assess the level of marine debris? <i>E.g. type of litter (size, shape, material) amount, impacts on species, geographical location etc.</i></p>	<p><b>Monitoring in the framework of OSPAR (beach litter) 2001 – 2016.</b> <b>Litter at sea monitored during bottom trawl surveys (ILVO) in the frame of OSPAR.</b> <b>Stomach content investigation of stranded animals.</b> <b>MSFD national reporting on Descriptor 10 in preparation (2018).</b></p>	
<p>b) What parameters are provided through this monitoring?</p>	<p><b>Stomach content</b></p>	
<p>c) Are these data publicly available?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b></p>	<p><b>Link</b></p>

Y/N If so, please provide a link.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
d) In the last year, what species of small cetaceans were found to have been impacted by marine debris?	<b>None</b> <b>In 2017: bowhead whale entangled in fishing gear (?)</b> <b>In 2016: narwhal with a relatively large number of small plastic items ingested, but probably peri-mortem</b>	
e) Are there any mitigation measures in place? Y/N	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	If yes, what mitigation measures are being used? <i>E.g. changes in gear to prevent loss, entanglement response, adoption of measures to reduce land-based/boat-based source of marine debris.</i>  <b>General programs to reduce litter (government) and initiatives from the public to clean beaches</b>
f) Other relevant information. <i>E.g. link to OSPAR reports (FCS and GES being covered already so no need to duplicate)</i>	<b>MSFD implementation report in preparation.</b> <b>OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2017.</b>	
g) Relevant new research/work/collaboration on marine debris.	<b>Plastic in fulmar assessed (see OSPAR IA 2017)</b>	

### SECTION III: SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

#### A. Biological Information (per species)

##### 1. Dedicated Surveys (abundance and distribution)

***If additional space is required, please submit the information in a table in excel. Attach maps separately, clearly marking which survey they apply to.***

Region (map of survey area)	Project	Time Period	Method (e.g. line transect, Photo ID etc.)	Species	Abundance of animals (including confidence limits) if applicable	Link to project/report/publication

Belgian part of the North Sea	Aerial surveys to assess abundance and distribution	2008 onwards	Line transect surveys	All marine mammals	Total abundance of harbour porpoises ranging from 100 to over 10,000	MSFD report in preparation; several reports on effects of offshore windfarm construction: <a href="http://odnature.naturalsciences.be/mumm/en/windfarms/#monitoring">http://odnature.naturalsciences.be/mumm/en/windfarms/#monitoring</a>
Belgian part of the North Sea	Passive Acoustic Monitoring: (1) as part of offshore windfarm monitoring) and (2) as part of the EU funded Lifewatch network	2008 onwards	PAM (currently) using C-PoDs	Harbour porpoises and other high frequency cetaceans sp. indet.	No absolute abundance; detection as DPm/d, DPd/month,...	Several reports on effects of offshore windfarm construction; <a href="http://odnature.naturalsciences.be/mumm/en/windfarms/#monitoring">http://odnature.naturalsciences.be/mumm/en/windfarms/#monitoring</a>  <a href="http://www.vliz.be/en/c-pod-cetacean-acoustic-hydrophone-network-2">http://www.vliz.be/en/c-pod-cetacean-acoustic-hydrophone-network-2</a>

**B. Other relevant monitoring/survey activities**

1. Is there a national monitoring programme that enables Conservation Status of cetaceans in your waters to be assessed? <i>(provides abundance estimates and/or life history parameters and</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	If yes, please provide details: (1) Regular aerial surveys to assess density and distribution, and potentially effects of offshore windfarm construction. (2) Strandings investigation network, with efforts towards establishing causes of death.
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<p>information on pressures)</p>		
<p>2. Please provide an overview of current national monitoring programmes:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With in MMPAS</li> </ul>	<p><b>Approach:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Photo-ID  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line transect surveys  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passive Acoustic Monitoring  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strandings</p>	<p><b>Target Species:</b>  Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With in Seas</li> </ul>	<p><b>Approach:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Photo-ID  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line transect surveys  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passive Acoustic Monitoring  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strandings</p>	<p><b>Target Species:</b>  <b>All cetaceans, but only harbour porpoise common</b></p>
<p>3. Are any of these programmes carried out in collaboration with other Parties?</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If yes, please provide details:  Stranding network relying on numerous volunteers, other institutions, coastguard partners, local authorities...</p>
<p>4. Links to Relevant Outputs</p>	<p><a href="http://odnature.naturalsciences.be/mumm/en/windfarms/#monitoring">http://odnature.naturalsciences.be/mumm/en/windfarms/#monitoring</a>  <a href="http://www.marinemammals.be/reports">http://www.marinemammals.be/reports</a></p>	
<p><b>C. <u>Life history parameters by ASCOBANS species – if easier please submit information in a table in Excel format.</u></b></p>		
<p>1. Age at sexual and physical maturity</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If yes, please provide links and details where applicable:  See www.marinemammals.be</p>
<p>2. Inter-birth intervals</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If yes, please provide links and details where applicable:  Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
<p>3. Calf and adult mortality rates</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b></p>	<p>If yes, please provide links and details where applicable:  Click or tap here to enter text.</p>

4. Potential reproductive span/capacity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide links and details where applicable: Click or tap here to enter text.
5. Longevity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide links and details where applicable: Click or tap here to enter text.
6. Diet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide links and details where applicable: <b>Stomach contents available, but no report since 2011</b>
7. Age and sex structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide links and details where applicable: <b>Only for stranded animals</b>
8. Other relevant factors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide links and details where applicable: <b>Autopsies cover a wide range of aspects, including disease agents, pollutant load, etc.</b>

***If you are entering information for more than one species, please enter the data in the above-mentioned categories here:***

Click or tap here to enter text.

#### SECTION IV: USE OF BYCATCHES AND STRANDINGS

##### A. Stranding Network

1. Is there a national stranding network in place?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide details below: Coordinated by the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)
2. Please add the names and URLs of all national stranding/necropsy networks	<a href="http://www.marinemammals.be">http://www.marinemammals.be</a>	
3. Does this cover the whole or part of the reporting country's coastline?	<b>Yes, including internal waters</b>	
4. Are necropsies carried out to determine cause of death?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, please provide details below: <b>See <a href="http://www.marinemammals.be/reports">http://www.marinemammals.be/reports</a></b> In July 2017, the Department of Veterinary Pathology (University of Liege, Belgium), the Laboratory of Applied Bioacoustics (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Spain) and the UMS Pelagis, Centre de Recherche sur les Mammifères Marins (University of La Rochelle, France) organised the 11 <sup>th</sup> annual marine mammal necropsy workshop at the Veterinary College of the University of Liège (Jauniaux et al., 2017). Twenty marine mammals were extensively necropsied and sampled, based on a standard procedure with a special attention for the extraction and

		<p>fixation (injection) of the inner ear of cetaceans. There were 20 European and non-European participants. ACCOBAM supported the participation of some experts.</p> <p>Jauniaux, T., André, M., Dabin, W., Morell, M. &amp; D Vreese, S., 2017. Marine mammal strandings: guidelines for post-mortem investigations of cetaceans and pinnipeds. 11 necropsy workshop, special issue on necropsy and sampling. Presses de la Faculté de Médecine vétérinaire de l'Université de Liège, Belgium. ISBN 978-2-87543-109-7</p>
<p>5. Are any cases photographed, measured or sampled even if not collected for necropsy?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	<p>If yes, please provide details below:  Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
<p>6. Is there a database of strandings?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	<p>If yes, please provide link to and details of responsible institutions:  RBINS and University of Liège</p>
<p>7. Is the data available online or downloadable on request?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b>	<p>If yes, please provide details below:  <a href="http://www.marinemammals.be">http://www.marinemammals.be</a></p>
<p>8. ASCOBANS is currently developing a web-accessed database for marine mammals strandings and necropsy data (see <a href="#">AC23/Inf.9.1.a</a>). Please indicate which national stranding network(s) you designate to become part of this international web-accessed database:</p>	<p><b>There is only one network</b></p>	
<p>9. Please state whom to contact for integrating this</p>	<p><b>Jan Haelters</b></p>	

stranding network into the ASCOBANS database (name, position, email, telephone)	<b>Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), OD Nature – MUMM, 3de en 23ste Linierregimentsplein, B-8400 Oostende, Belgium tel.: +32(0)59.70.01.31 jhaelters@naturalsciences.be</b>
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**B. Parties Involved**

1. Live-Stranding Responses Details (phone, email, website)	same
2. Reporting of Carcasses Details (phone, email, website)	same

**C. Stranding numbers from reporting year (2017)**

*If additional space is required, please submit the following information in a table in excel, as an attachment with this form.*

<b>Species</b>	<b>Total number of stranding events</b>	<b>Total number of individuals (dead/alive)</b>	<b>Number necropsied</b>	<b>Most common cause of death</b>	<b>Other Causes of Death</b>
Harbour porpoise	93	93	30	Natural (disease and starvation : 38%; grey seal predation : 32,5%)	Bycatch (26,5%); 64% of stranded animals had an unknown cause of death
White-beaked dolphin	1	1	1	Bycatch	
Bottlenose dolphin	1	1	1	Unknown, but probably acute	Click or tap here to enter text.

**D. New and Relevant Publications  
(Including new methods and any new projects using samples/outputs)**

Debusschere, E., De Coensel, B. & Haelters, J., 2017. Hoe lawaaierig is de oceaan? De Grote Rede 46: 14-18.

Damseaux, F., Lepoint, G., Pomeroy, P., Siebert, U., Jauniaux, T. & Das, K., 2017. A meta-analysis of isotopic compositions of North Sea marine mammals. 22nd Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM), Halifax, Canada, 22-27 oktober 2017 (poster).

Gilles, A., Viquerat, S., Aarts, G., Becker, E.A., Daewel, U., Geelhoed, S., Haelters, J., Nabe-Nielsen, J., Scheidat, M., Schrum, C., Siebert, U., Sveegaard, S., van Beest, F.M., Forney, K.A., 2017. New opportunities in dynamic species management for the harbour porpoise. Abstract book of the 31st Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society, Middelfart, Denmark, 1-3 May 2017: 54 (Abstract and presentation).

Gilles, A., Viquerat, S., Aarts, G., Becker, E.A., Daewel, U., Geelhoed, S.C.V., Haelters, J., Nabe-Nielsen, J., Scheidat, M., Schrum, C., Siebert, U., Sveegaard, S., van Beest, F.M., van Bemmelen, R., Forney, K.A., 2017. Key elements for dynamic species management for cetaceans. 22nd Biennial World Conference of the Society for Marine Mammalogy, Halifax, Canada, 22-27 October 2017. Presentation and abstract.

Haelters, J., 2017. Arctic climate fugitives? *Lutra* 60(1): 1-3.

Haelters, J., Kerckhof, F., Rumes, B., Potin, M. & Jauniaux, T., 2017. Strandingen en waarnemingen van zeezoogdieren en opmerkelijke vissen in België in 2016 [Strandings and sightings of marine mammals and some remarkable fish species in Belgium in 2016]. Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen (KBIN), Brussel. 30 pp.

Haelters, J., Kerckhof, F., Doom, M., Evans, P.G.H., Van den Neucker, T. & Jauniaux, T., 2018. New extralimital record of a narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*) in Europe. *Aquatic Mammals* 44(1), 39-50. DOI 10.1578/AM.44.1.2018.39

Lempereur, L., Delobelle, M., Doom, M., Haelters, J., Levy, E., Losson, B. & Jauniaux, T., 2017. *Crassicauda boopis* in a fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) ship-struck in the eastern North Atlantic Ocean. *Parasitology Open* (3): e9. doi.org/10.1017/pao.2017.10

Rumes, B. & Debusschere, E., 2017. Effects of pile driving on harbour porpoises in the Belgian part of the North Sea. 22nd Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM), Halifax, Canada, 22-27 October 2017 (poster).

Rumes, B., Debusschere, E., Reubens, J., Norro, A., Haelters, J., Deneudt K. & Degraer, S., 2017. Determining the spatial and temporal extent of the influence of pile driving noise on harbour porpoises. In: Degraer, S., Brabant, R., Rumes, B., Vigin, L. (Eds). 2016. Environmental impacts of offshore wind farms in the Belgian part of the North Sea: A continued move towards integration and quantification: 129-141. Koninklijk Belgisch Instituut voor Natuurwetenschappen (KBIN), Brussel.

**SECTION V: OTHER MATTERS**

<b>A. Other information or comments important for the Agreement</b>	<i>None</i>
<b>B. Difficulties in implementing the Agreement</b>	<i>Overlap with legal obligations within EU fora</i>