

Agenda Item 3.1

Species Action Plans

Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour
Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan)

Information Document 3.1a

Action Points from the 18th Meeting of the
Jastarnia Group

Action Requested

Take note

Submitted by

Secretariat



Secretariat's Note

The Action Points from the 18th Meeting of the Steering Group for the ASCOBANS Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises and the Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat (Jastarnia Group) were circulated to Parties in April 2022 for intersessional consideration.

Two edit suggestions were received and incorporated, and the timing of one Action Point was agreed to be discussed at the 27th Meeting of the Advisory Committee. With these changes, the Action Points were adopted.

The Action Points can also be found on the relevant meeting page:

<https://www.ascobans.org/en/document/action-points-18th-meeting-jastarnia-group>.

ACTION POINTS FROM THE 18TH MEETING OF THE JASTARNIA GROUP

Jastarnia and WBBK Plans

(Adopted by the Advisory Committee)

Reference	Action Point (and old reference)	Jastarnia Plan		WBBK Plan	
		Applies	Mandate	Applies	Mandate
JG18/AP1	Parties shall establish or further improve local and national monitoring programmes for Harbour Porpoise abundance and occurrence and to further ensure these are aligned in terms of timing and methodology between countries, in order to complement large-scale international monitoring activities. (JG17/AP1)	X	MON-01: Implement and harmonize long-term continual acoustic Harbour Porpoise monitoring	X	Objective d: Monitoring the status of the population
JG18/AP2	All Parties, and other countries bordering the Baltic Sea, are strongly encouraged to support SAMBAH-II, specifically in terms of fundraising, in order for a project proposal to be submitted as soon as possible. Noting that management authorities may be required to be formal partners for a re-application. (updated JG17/AP2)	X			
JG18/AP3	Parties are strongly encouraged to continue to undertake and cooperate on the SCANS surveys, including the upcoming SCANS IV, planned for 2022. (JG17/AP3)			X	Rec.7: Estimate trends in abundance of Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat
JG18/AP4	Parties are strongly encouraged to use the data provided by SAMBAH, national monitoring programmes, acoustic research projects and any other available data, in connection with the establishment and evaluation of MPAs for Harbour Porpoises, as well as with regard to management plans and mitigation measures. (updated JG17/AP4)	X	MIT-06: Expand the network of protected areas for Harbour Porpoises, improve its connectivity, and develop and implement appropriate management plans including monitoring schemes for these areas		
JG18/AP5	Parties should investigate possible detrimental effects of various types of sound and disturbance on Harbour Porpoises and their detection (including pinger signals, noise from vessels, seismic surveys, underwater explosions, wind parks or construction). Parties should initiate	X	RES-07: Improve knowledge on impact of impulsive and continuous anthropogenic underwater noise on Harbour Porpoises, and development of	X	Objective e: Ensuring habitat quality favourable to the conservation of the Harbour Porpoise

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	and support studies on the effect of anthropogenic noise on the Harbour Porpoise both on the individual and on a population level. (JG17/AP5)		threshold limits of significant disturbance and GES indicators		
JG18/AP6	Parties are encouraged to seek cooperation with the HELCOM EN NOISE to develop HELCOM-wide harmonized national regulations on sound emissions associated with anthropogenic activities in the marine environment. Such regulations should set upper limits to sound emissions and be consistent with the relevant Indicators for Good Environmental Status to be developed for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Parties are also encouraged to develop HELCOM-wide coordinated guidelines for noise mitigation, taking into account the CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessments for Marine Noise-generating Activities. (JG17/AP6).	X	MIT-05: Implement regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise	X	Rec. 11: Restore or maintain habitat quality
JG18/AP7	Parties are required to establish systems to effectively monitor bycatch covering all sizes of fishing vessels, in line with the HELCOM Roadmap on fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatch and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea and the ICES Special Request Advice on emergency measures to prevent bycatch of common dolphin and Baltic Proper harbour porpoise in the Northeast Atlantic. (JG17/AP7)	X	MON-03: Monitor and estimate Harbour Porpoise bycatch rates and estimate total annual bycatch	X	Rec.6: Estimate total annual bycatch
JG18/AP8	Parties are strongly encouraged to carry out spatio-temporal risk-assessments of Harbour Porpoise bycatch using Harbour Porpoise distribution and fishing effort data. (JG17/AP8)	X	RES-04: Carry out a spatio-temporal risk assessment of Harbour Porpoise bycatch	X	
JG18/AP9	Parties should implement and where needed further develop, in cooperation with stakeholders, any available fishing gear that does not cause, or is shown to significantly reduce, harbour porpoise bycatch, and strive to replace static nets with such alternative gear, especially in MPAs, as soon as possible. (JG17/AP9)	X	RES-05: Further develop and improve fishing gear that is commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch MIT-01: Implement the use of fishing gear that is	X	Objective b: Mitigation of bycatch

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			commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch		
JG18/AP10	When alternative gear is not sufficient to eliminate harbour porpoise bycatch, Parties should promote the use and further development of pingers not audible to seals and alerting devices other than pingers. (updated JG17/AP10)	X	RES-05: Further develop and improve fishing gear that is commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch	X	Objective b: Mitigation of bycatch
JG18/AP11	Parties should monitor the use and functioning of dedicated harbour porpoise deterrent and alerting devices, including studies to assess their effect on bycatch reduction and on harbour porpoise behaviour and distribution, as well as their possible interference with military underwater acoustic activities. (updated JG17/AP11)	X	MIT-03: Continue or implement the use of acoustic deterrent devices (pingers) and acoustic alerting devices proven to be successful when and where deemed appropriate RES-06: Improve the knowledge on potential population-level effects of the use of pingers, and develop acoustic devices for bycatch mitigation further	X	Rec. 9: Ensure a non-detrimental use of pingers by examining habitat exclusion and long-term effects of pingers
JG18/AP12	With respect to recreational fisheries, Parties should work towards banning or limiting the use of those types of gear known to pose a threat to harbour porpoises, or introduce effective mitigation measures shown to significantly reduce or eliminate bycatch. (JG17/AP12)	X	MIT-02: Reduce or eliminate fishing effort with gillnets or other gear known to cause porpoise bycatch in areas with higher Harbour Porpoise density or occurrence, and/or in areas with higher risk of Harbour Porpoise bycatch, according to spatio-temporal risk assessments	X	Rec.3: Protect Harbour Porpoises in their key habitats in minimizing bycatch as far as possible Rec.5: Where possible replace gillnet fisheries known to be associated with high porpoise bycatch with alternative fishing gear known to be less harmful
JG18/AP13	Parties are encouraged to coordinate and standardize monitoring of stranded and bycaught animals, determining the appropriate number of animals to be necropsied in each country, ensuring that health, contaminant load, life-history parameters and cause of death is examined in a coherent manner, and that tissue samples are collected from	X	MON-04: Collect dead specimens and assess health status, contaminant levels, cause of mortality and life-history parameters of Harbour Porpoises	X	Rec.8: Monitor population health status, contaminant load and causes of mortality

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	all carcasses from the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise distribution range. All necropsies and sampling should be carried out in accordance with the ASCOBANS-ACCOBAMS <i>Best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigation and tissue sampling.</i> (updated JG17/AP13)				
JG18/AP14	All Parties and Range States should establish programmes for recording bycatch, strandings and opportunistic sightings for inclusion in a national database, and report annually to the ASCOBANS/HELCOM database. (JG17/AP15)	X	PACB-01: Improve communication and education for increased public awareness and collection of live observations and dead specimens of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise	X	Objective d: Monitoring the status of the population
JG18/AP15	ASCOBANS should join efforts with HELCOM to liaise with the European Commission and other relevant bodies to improve the implementation by Member States of the EU Technical Measures Regulation and the Data Collection Framework to better incorporate and tackle bycatch concerns. (JG17/AP16)	X	COOP-02: Strive for close cooperation between ASCOBANS and other international bodies	X	Rec.2: Cooperate with and inform other relevant bodies about the Conservation Plan
JG18/AP16	Parties should ensure that Belt Sea and Baltic Sea populations of harbour porpoises are assessed and managed as separate populations, e.g. in management plans and national redlists. (JG17/AP17)	X	Other	X	Other
JG18/AP17	Countries who have raised concerns on possible interference of acoustic deterrent devices on military underwater acoustic activities, are strongly called to investigate the extent of the issue, to ensure that any decisions are based on evidence that is strong enough to justify any negative impact on the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise population or the fishing industry. (JG17/AP18)	X	MIT-03: Continue or implement the use of acoustic deterrent devices (pingers) and acoustic alerting devices proven to be successful when and where deemed appropriate		
JG18/AP18	Given that the ICES Special Request advice states that even 100% fulfilment of the advice is not enough to reach the PBR limit of 0.7 animals/year, the Jastarnia Group also urges for swift implementation of the	X	Objective: Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch		

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	recommendations on measures for bycatch mitigation made by ICES in areas of more than occasional Harbour Porpoise occurrence, in further steps as soon as possible. (updated JG17/AP19)				
JG18/AP19	Countries are urged to, without delay, prepare a BALTFISH Joint Recommendation that includes effective bycatch mitigation measures outside MPAs, in areas of more than occasional harbour porpoise occurrence, noting that coastal habitats are also of high importance for harbour porpoises. It is noted that the real-time closures/moving-on procedure is not considered a measure to mitigate harbour porpoise bycatch in the Baltic Proper, and may be counterproductive because it prevents effective measures being taken. (updated JG17/AP20)	X	Objective: Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch		
JG18/AP20	Parties are urged to ensure a proposal to list the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise in CMS Appendix I is brought to CMS COP14 in 2023. (JG17/AP21)	X	Other		
JG18/AP21	It was agreed that the delimitation between the North Sea and WBBK harbour porpoise plans should be the management unit border identified by Sveegaard et al 2015 in Kattegat at 56.95°N. The area for the WBBK should have its eastern delimitation at the management unit border identified by Sveegaard et al 2015 at 13.5°E, while the Jastarnia plan area should be east of 13.0°E, according to the ICES scientific advice of May 2020. The overlap of the WBBK and Jastarnia plans areas will be considered in the Jastarnia Group's discussions of the plans. (JG17/AP22)	X	Other	X	Other
JG18/AP22	Parties are recommended to consider the bycatch risk maps produced during the HELCOM ACTION project and the upcoming risk maps from the HELCOM BLUES project to determine additional areas for bycatch mitigation for the Baltic Proper population. In the absence of pinger use, the only immediate mitigation measure	X	RES-04: Carry out a spatio-temporal risk assessment of Harbour Porpoise bycatch Objective: Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch		

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	possible to protect harbour porpoises is further closures of static net fisheries in areas of importance to harbour porpoises. In these areas, gear types known to not cause bycatch of harbour porpoises (such as pots, traps, and long lines) can be used.				
JG18/AP23	HELCOM BLUES is encouraged to prioritise the work on bycatch risk maps for the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise. The outcomes to be considered by countries to take further bycatch mitigation measures.	X	RES-04: Carry out a spatio-temporal risk assessment of Harbour Porpoise bycatch Objective: Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch		
JG18/AP24	It is recommended that a representative from the Jastarnia Group as well as relevant experts be invited to the workshop(s) agreed by ASCOBANS AC26 to consider navies' mitigation practice in the use of military sonar and management of other activities that can contribute to potentially harmful underwater noise, including the removal and/or detonation of UXO; and solutions for acoustic monitoring and bycatch mitigation (deterrent devices) in synergy with national security activities (see AC26 AP3).	X	Action MIT-05: Implement regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise		Rec.11: Restore or maintain habitat quality
JG18/AP25	Jastarnia Group to send a letter (signed by the Chair) to all Baltic Proper Range States and their national navies, raising concern of the effect of underwater explosions to harbour porpoises, and to inform them about effective mitigation measures.* (JG17 Internal AP2)	X	Action MIT-05: Implement regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise		
JG18/AP26	Parties and Range States are strongly encouraged to financially support the CIBBRiNA Life project on mitigating bycatch.	X	Objective: Monitor, estimate and reduce bycatch	X	Rec.3: Protect Harbour Porpoises in their key habitats in minimizing bycatch as far as possible
JG18/AP27	AC27 is requested to discuss the topic of rapid growth of construction for offshore energy production, and Parties and Range States to consider harbour porpoise conservation needs during offshore energy development.	X	Action MIT-05: Implement regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise	X	Rec.11: Restore or maintain habitat quality

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JG18/AP28	AC27 is requested to make funding available for a consultant to do the revision of the <i>Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat</i> , so that an advanced draft is ready by AC28 in 2023.			X	Other
JG18/AP29	AC27 is requested to give guidance on the procedure for its working groups, including JG, to provide advice on urgent matters to relevant stakeholders.	X	Other	X	Other

* Timing to be discussed at the 27th Meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC27).