

Agenda Item 2

Review of New Information on Threats and
Other Issues Relevant to Small Cetaceans

Document NR.8

2021 Annual National Report: Belgium

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Belgium



2021 ASCOBANS National Report

1 January – 31 December 2021

As outlined in ASCOBANS [Resolution 8.1 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#) *National Reporting*, this form will cover the year 2021 (Year 2), and the following topics included in the Annex to the Resolution, in addition to the standard Sections I (General Information) and VII (Other Matters):

- Bycatch (Section II A1)
- Resource Depletion (Section II A2)
- Marine Debris (Section II C9)
- Surveys and Research (Section III A: Biological Information, B: Monitoring Programmes, C: Other Research)
- Use of Strandings Records (Section IV)

The national reports submitted will inform discussions at the 27th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (28-30 September 2022).

- All questions apply to the reporting period of 1 January - 31 December 2021.
- Region in the tables refers to the sub-regions as defined by the HELCOM and OSPAR, and Areas refers to the sub-areas as defined by ICES. An overview and maps of these can be found in Annex A. Species can be chosen from the drop-down list provided, based on ASCOBANS species list, see Annex B.
- Throughout the form, please include relevant web links and add rows where applicable.
- The deadline for the submission of National Reports is 31 March 2022.

Where possible, National Coordinators should consult with, or delegate to, experts for particular topics so as to ease the reporting burden. The Secretariat has provided a list of potential country contacts as a starting point. Once the baseline information is in place, it should become easier to update in the future.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat:
ascobans.secretariat@ascobans.org.

High-level Summary of Key Messages

In your country, for 2021 (Year 2), what does this report reveal about:

1. The most successful aspects of implementation of the Agreement? (list up to five items)

- A well-established strandings network.
- Ongoing consultations with the military about mitigation measures in case of the destruction of UxO.

2. The greatest challenges in implementing the Agreement? (list up to five items)

- The overlap between the many different fora that require similar information.
- The overlapping analyses of data that are submitted in different fora, and assessments.

3. The main priorities for future implementation of the Agreement? (list up to five items)

- Streamlining the work in different international fora in order to avoid the duplication of work.
- Continuation of the work on the mitigation of underwater noise, using the best available technology, and avoiding exposure to underwater noise of cetaceans during construction works.

Section I: General Information

A. Country Information

1. Name of Party / Non-Party Range State: Belgium

2. Details of the Report Compiler

Name: Jan Haelters
 Function: Scientific collaborator
 Organization: Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)
 Postal Address: 3de en 23ste Linierregimentsplein, B-8400 Ostend, Belgium
 Telephone: +32 59 24 20 55
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 Does the Report Compiler act as ASCOBANS National Coordinator (i.e. focal point)?
 No Yes

3. Details of contributor(s)

Topic(s) contributed to:
 Name:
 Function:
 Organization:
 Postal Address:
 Telephone:
 Email:

Copy box if needed.

Section II: Habitat Conservation and Management (threats and pressures on cetaceans)

A. Fisheries-related Threats

1. Bycatch

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 9.2, **8.5 (Rev.MOP9)**, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.8, 5.7, **5.5, 3.3**

Bycatch, the entanglement of an animal in fishing gear, is identified as a major cause of mortality in small cetaceans. Every effort should be made to reduce bycatch towards zero as quickly as possible. Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance of mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area, as available data indicates that levels of bycatch pose a considerable threat to their conservation status. Parties have agreed that modifications of fishing gear and relevant practices shall be applied in order to reduce negative impacts where data indicates unacceptable interaction. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

To better understand the extent of the impact of bycatch on small cetaceans, monitoring and mitigation measures in place, and ongoing work in the Agreement Area, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: This section includes bycatch in recreational fisheries.

Questions:

1.1. How is bycatch assessed/monitored in your country?

Method	Used	Percentage (% by monitoring method, of total bycaught animals, by gear type if applicable)
Dedicated observer schemes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fisheries observes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Remote Electronic Monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Self-reporting by fishermen	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pathological investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assessment at stranding site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	100%

Comments:

No bycatch monitoring as very few fishermen engaged in static gear fisheries (1 or 2). Only information from stranded animals, with no information about the fisheries involved.

1.2. Which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch by commercial fishing in the reporting period?

Overview of bycaught small cetaceans per region. Provide information where available.

Species	Number of bycaught animals observed	Year (incl. season if available)	Gear type	Area	Overall sampling effort	Monitoring method used
Choose an item.				Choose an item.		
Choose an item.				Choose an item.		

1.3. Which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch by recreational fishing in the reporting period?

Overview of bycaught small cetaceans per region. Provide information where available.

Species	Number of bycaught animals observed	Year (incl. season if available)	Gear type	Area	Overall sampling effort	Monitoring method used
HP Harbour porpoise	1	2021	Trammel net	27.4.c	NR	Observation of bycatch in an illegally set beach trammelnet
Choose an item.				Choose an item.		

1.4. Has there been any notable incidents/issues related to bycatch during the reporting period in your country?

No.

Yes. Please provide details:

(Mass bycatch incidents, unusual species bycatch etc.)

1.5. Are there any mitigation measures in place?

No.

Yes. Please provide details: What mitigation measures (including alternative gear) are being used and where? (Acoustic deterrent devices, seasonal closures, gear modifications etc.)

Mitigation approach	Region	Year implemented	Has the mitigation measure been effective?
Recreational use of gill- and trammelnets at sea not allowed anymore	OII Southern North Sea	2001	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes. Comments:
Recreational use of gill- and trammelnets on the beach not allowed anymore	OII Southern North Sea	2015	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes. Comments:
Slight adaptations to fyke nets used on the beach for recreational purposes, predominantly to avoid bycatch of seals	OII Southern North Sea	2022	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Comments: unknown

1.6. Have there been changes in fishing effort (for fisheries known to have an impact) in the reporting period?

No.

Unknown/not applicable. Comments:

Yes. Please provide details:

Not to our knowledge in 2021

1.7. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on bycatch in your country.

No dedicated research other than the assessment of causes of death in strandings schemes.

1.8. Is the perceived level of pressure from bycatch in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown	Nature of the evidence (e.g. strandings, observer schemes)
HP Harbour porpoise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Since 2015 very few animals caught in recreational beach gill- and trammelnet

					fisheries, as not allowed anymore.
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Not applicable. Comments: Very few professional fishermen using static gear, with most static nets set outside 12 nm from foreign fishermen.

A. Fisheries-related Threats

2. Resource Depletion

AIM: to determine areas where, and to what extent, depletion of fish stocks have occurred during the reporting period. In addition, identify ongoing mitigation efforts regarding detrimental implications for small cetaceans.
Relevant Resolutions: 8.9, 8.3, 7.1, 6.1

Depletion in fish stocks due to overfishing and other factors generates pressure on the favourable conservation status of small cetaceans (through possible food shortage). More integrated management and reductions in fishing effort (also prompted by concern about fish stock depletion or other ecosystem considerations) have been encouraged, especially in areas of known risk. Further research, effective fishery regulations and innovation within certain fishing methods are considered to be helpful steps towards mitigating this pressure.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that (1) determine the impact of the depletion of fish stocks on small cetaceans, (2) encourage fishing effort reductions and (3) review new information on these depletions to make recommendations. Resource depletion in the Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand the extent of prey depletions, any related ongoing work, monitoring and mitigation measures in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Questions:

2.1. Based on the latest stock assessments, are there any notable depletions of fish species which would be a concern for small cetaceans?

- No.**
- Yes.**

Please provide details.

Not in 2021 – long-term depletions available in reports by ICES and OSPAR.

2.2. Where are these depletions in national waters occurring?

Sub-areas/regions as defined by ICES/OSPAR & HELCOM.

Area	Region
Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Choose an item.	Choose an item.

2.3. What measures are being taken to manage pressures on depleted fish stocks, including relevant regulations/guidelines (current / planned / year of implementation)?

Measure	Timeframe information	Relevant driver

2.4. Is there any evidence within your country’s national waters that resource depletion may be impacting small cetaceans (e.g. evidence of starvation)?

- No.
- Yes.

Please provide details.

There is circumstantial evidence from necropsies. For the last decade an increasing number of porpoises is diagnosed with death due to emaciation without other pathological processes as usually observed during necropsy (infectious diseases, parasitosis). An average of 10% of porpoises that are necropsied are suffering of emaciation and the most relevant explanation for such process is starvation. However, data need to be put together and factors possibly causing a bias (eg. a reduction in animals that died due to bycatch) should be investigated. Also, there is currently no link with any information about resource depletion.

2.5. Are there any national efforts to evaluate cetacean body condition at sea (e.g. surveys)?

- No.
- Yes.

Please provide details.

2.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on resource depletion in your country.

Monitoring in the frame of the CFP – DCF-MAP.

2.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from resource depletion in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown	Nature of the evidence
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Not applicable. Comments: see reports from [ICES](#) and [OSPAR](#), and monitoring in the frame of the CFP.

C. Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)

9. Marine Debris (ingestion and entanglement)

AIM: to illustrate progress, during the reporting period, on understanding, monitoring and mitigating impacts of marine debris on small cetaceans.
Relevant Resolutions: 8.8, 8.3, 6.1

Marine debris, such as macroplastics and discarded fishing gear, poses a threat to small cetaceans due to the potential for these materials to be ingested or to cause entanglement. Commercial fishing operations, recreational fishing and cargo shipping are notable sources of this material, of which the majority is plastic and ghost nets. However, it is assumed that most of the marine litter worldwide comes from land, although this differs per region. Even small amounts of macroplastics that have been ingested may present serious effects on small cetaceans, such as detrimental influence on the gastrointestinal tract or leaching pollutants into the body, potentially leading to mortality or reduced body condition. Entanglement is well-established as a threat to small cetaceans as plastic debris continues to accumulate in aquatic environments, and may cause physical injuries, reduced survival or drowning.

To better understand the impact of marine debris on small cetaceans and measures in place to mitigate these effects, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: Includes macroplastics and discarded fishing gear. Microplastics are covered under Section C 10 Pollution and Hazardous Substances.

Questions:

9.1. Does your country have monitoring in place to assess levels of marine debris?

- No. Go to **Question 9.3.**
 Yes. Provide information in the table below:

Monitoring in the framework of OSPAR.

9.2. Are these data publicly available?

- No.
 Yes. Please provide web link:

OSPAR website, OSPAR reports https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/marine-litter; https://odnature.naturalsciences.be/msfd/nl/assessments/2018/page-d10

9.3. What species of small cetaceans were found to have been impacted by marine debris?

Species	# of impacted individuals	Year	Region	Description of the impact
Choose an item.		dd/mm/yy	Choose an item.	
Choose an item.		dd/mm/yy	Choose an item.	
Choose an item.		dd/mm/yy	Choose an item.	

9.4. Are there any mitigation measures in place?

- No.
 Yes. Provide information in the table below.

Mitigation measures might include changes in gear to prevent loss, entanglement response, adoption of measures to reduce land-based/boat-based sources of marine debris, etc.

Measure:	There are a lot of national measures in place to reduce marine litter, ranging from reducing the use of plastics at the source, to beach cleanup campaigns, fishing for litter campaigns (fishermen) and the cleanup of a selection of shipwrecks.		
Date of implementation:	Ongoing	Region: Oil Southern North Sea	
Has the measure been effective?	<input type="checkbox"/> No. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes. Comments: dependent on the measure		
Other information:	https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth_theme_file/evaluatie_federaal_actieplan_marien_zwerfvuil_0.pdf		

Copy table if needed.

9.5. How is marine debris managed? (incl. relevant regulations / guidelines and the year of implementation, current and planned)

Action plan on marine litter by the government can be consulted at: https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth_theme_file/action_plan_marine_litter.pdf
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9.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on marine debris in your country.

Overview of research into marine litter and microplastics: Devriese, L.I.; Janssen, C.R. (2021). Overzicht van het onderzoekslandschap en de wetenschappelijke informatie inzake (marien) zwerfvuil en microplastics in België. VLIZ Beleidsinformerende Nota's, 2021_001. Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee (VLIZ): Oostende. ISBN 9789464206043. https://odnature.naturalsciences.be/msfd/nl/monitoring/2020/

Devriese, L.I.; Janssen, C.R. (2022). Beleidsinformerende Nota: Overzicht van het onderzoekslandschap en de wetenschappelijke informatie inzake (marien) zwerfvuil en microplastics in België. VLIZ Beleidsinformerende Nota's, 2022_001. Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee (VLIZ): Oostende. 57 pp. <https://dx.doi.org/10.48470/27>

9.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from marine debris in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

To be done per species where applicable.

Species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown	Nature of the evidence
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Not applicable. Comments: we hardly ever find small cetaceans impacted by marine debris.

Section III: Surveys and Research

A. Biological Information (per species)

1. Abundance estimates

AIM: to provide new information on abundance and life history parameters of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7, 5.5, **4.7, 3.5, 3.3**

Abundance estimates and information on life history are of critical importance for the determination of broader species attributes such as populations levels, health and overall status. These parameters can contribute towards determination of GES and provide a reference for mortality events. Abundance and life history parameters are typically assessed from monitoring programmes. Fluctuations in these parameters can provide insight into trends in populations. Information on abundance and life history parameters can inform the need for mitigation measures, and regional assessment of these parameters allows for a more spatially targeted and concentrated response to support national assessments.

In the ASCOBANS Area, small cetacean abundance and life history should be monitored in response to a number of ASCOBANS resolutions. Continued monitoring of these parameters is essential to understanding current status and trends.

Questions:

1.1. Did your country conduct national dedicated surveys on abundance and distribution during the reporting period?

- No.**
 Yes. Provide information in the table below.

Add rows if necessary. Attach maps separately, clearly marking which survey they apply to. **Note:** Information relevant to SCANS-IV is to be provided in Question 1.2.

Location	Project	Time period	Method	Species	Animal abundance (including confidence limits or CV)	Link to project/report/publication
Belgian waters	National monitoring	2021, yearly	Line transect + vertical imagery (strip transect)	Choose an item. All marine mammals	June: 0,81 (0,52-1,28) harbour porpoises/km ² ; September: 0,78 (0,44-1,35) harbour porpoises/km ²	Haelters, J., Moreau, K., Team SeaLife, Jauniaux, T. & Kerckhof, F., 2022. Strandings and sightings of marine mammals in Belgium in 2021. RBINS, Brussels (in

						French and Dutch).
			(e.g. line transect, Photo ID, etc.)	Choose an item.		
			(e.g. line transect, Photo ID, etc.)	Choose an item.		

Relevant information on distribution during the reporting period:

www.marinemammals.be/reports

1.2. Other relevant new research/work/collaboration on abundance estimates in regard to small cetaceans in your country during the reporting period.

Monitoring of harbour porpoises using PAM to investigate the effects of offshore windfarms (operational phase).

1.3. Is the abundance of species in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown? Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown	Nature of the evidence
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choose an item.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Not applicable. Comments: it is highly variable vs. the survey month, with a higher density in March and April than in June and September, and annual fluctuations.

A. Biological Information (per species)

2. New information on life history parameters

2.1. Is there new information on the following life history parameters in the reporting period?

For each life history parameter, please identify the species and provide web links and details where applicable.

Age of sexual and physical maturity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.
Inter-birth intervals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.
Calf and adult mortality rates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.
Potential reproductive span/capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.
Longevity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.
Diet	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: study on stomach content of harbour porpoises: Lambert, E., 2020. The feeding ecology of the harbour porpoise <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> L. in a changing environment. MSc. Thesis, Marine and Lacustrine Science and Management, Universiteit Antwerpen, Universiteit Gent, Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Species: HP Harbour porpoise

Age and sex structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.
Other relevant factors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please describe: Species: Choose an item.

B. Monitoring Programmes

3. Overview of current monitoring and survey schemes

AIM: to provide information on the progress of monitoring programmes, relevant methodologies and aims thereof, and status of small cetaceans during the reporting period.
Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.8, 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

Monitoring programmes provide important data on biological and environmental attributes, such as population status, abundance and spatial-temporal distribution. They create opportunities for new research and development, including potential improvements to methodology for monitoring in terms of accuracy, practicality and cost efficiency.

In the ASCOBANS Area, application of coherent monitoring programmes focused on small cetaceans, which collect and provide objective, robust and comparable data, is a key component in understanding and improving the conservation status of small cetaceans through appropriate management. Parties have agreed to design, implement and support relevant monitoring programmes through a number of resolutions. Such efforts are also supported by legislation from a number of bodies which identify monitoring as a requirement in management systems. Additionally, Parties have been encouraged to coordinate their monitoring programmes, which promotes international cooperation and synergies. Parties have also been encouraged to review such monitoring programmes and propose improvements for the betterment of conservation efforts.

It is the interest of ASCOBANS to understand the current monitoring programmes utilised, their outputs, and future activities in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities as well as potential improvements to such programmes and efforts.

Questions:

3.1. Did your country have national monitoring programmes that enabled assessment of the Conservation Status of small cetaceans in your waters (i.e. provides abundance estimates and/or life history parameters and information on pressures) during the reporting period?

No.

Yes. Please provide an overview in the table below.

Add rows if necessary.

Within MPAs	Approach: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line transect surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Photo-ID <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strandings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passive Acoustic Monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:
	Target Species: (Copy drop-down to add more species) HP Harbour porpoise
	Institution(s): RBINS (see section 1.1.); strandings scheme with other institutions involved
Wider Seas	Approach: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line transect surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Photo-ID <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strandings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Passive Acoustic Monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:
	Target Species: (Copy drop-down to add more species) Choose an item.

	Institution(s): RBINS (see section 1.1.); strandings scheme with other institutions involved; VLIZ Lifewatch network
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3.2. Please provide the relevant information regarding aerial surveying activities.

Provide the number of surveys, area covered, relevant species, and timeframe of the survey.
2 surveys, Belgian waters covered, harbour porpoise, June, September

3.3. Please provide the relevant information regarding Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM).

PAM using C-PoDs – assessment of the impact of operational wind farms; assessment of spatial and temporal changes in HP activity in throughout the Belgian part of the North Sea..

3.4. Are any of these programmes carried out in collaboration with other countries?

No.

Yes. Provide information below.

Aerial survey results shared for a wider assessment (a.o. for OSPAR QSR purposes).

3.5. Please provide details on any planned activities relevant to monitoring programmes.

Provide web links if available.

3.6. Relevant outputs/findings from monitoring programmes to note.

Per species, please identify the relevant outputs. Provide web links if available.

C. Other Research

Please provide relevant information in regard to other research (not mentioned elsewhere in Sections II, III, IV).

Health status monitoring since 1990, Dept of pathology, University of Liege: investigation of causes of death: necropsy, histopathology, and detection of selected pathogens (Brucella sp, Morbillivirus, Influenza, Herpesvirus,...)

Section IV: Use of Strandings Records**A. Stranding Network and Strandings**

AIM: to provide information on stranding events and demonstrate progress of stranding networks in understanding, monitoring and mitigating strandings of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: **8.10 (Rev.MOP9)**, 8.7, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.4, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

Stranding of cetaceans is an ever-present occurrence and analysis through necropsy and sampling can provide indications of reason for injury and death. Stranding numbers also provide information on population status, abundance and distribution. Effective response to strandings contributes to the maintenance of favourable conservation status of small cetaceans and also has implications for animal welfare. Comprehensive stranding networks are a critical asset in managing small cetacean strandings and have resulted in large numbers of animals rescued and returned to sea. These networks also have the capacity to guide the public on animal welfare, human health and safety considerations during stranding events.

In the effort to mitigate the anthropogenic causes of these occurrences, Parties have agreed to measures through a number of resolutions. Continued monitoring of stranding causation and further developing guidance for best practices in stranding response and necropsies was identified by Parties as important tasks to pursue, as was setting up stranding response networks. This information is to align with appropriate sampling practices and countries should ensure that the data is available for researchers. Additionally, development and support of international strandings databases and regular reporting is conducted through relevant research institutes and stranding schemes. ASCOBANS Secretariat encourages the ongoing funding and support of engagement with organizations for further development of guidelines, best practices and maintaining dataflow for capacity building across stranding networks.

To better understand the extent to which stranding events occur and how these events are managed, it is the interest of ASCOBANS for countries to provide the relevant information on these occurrences within the Agreement Area, procedures undertaken in response to stranding events, necropsies and information on stranding networks.

Questions:

1.1. Is there a national stranding network in place?

No. Go to **Question 1.4.**

Yes.

Please provide details:

RBINS organises the collection of useful animals and provides them to veterinary surgeons (universities of Ghent and Liège) for investigation. Some animals are investigated on the spot and discarded. Samples are distributed for further analyses.

1.2. Does the national stranding network cover the whole, or part of the reporting country's coastline?

Whole coastline.

Part of the coastline.

Please provide details:

1.3. Are necropsies carried out to determine cause of death?

No.

Yes.

Please provide details:

On around 30% of the stranded harbour porpoises, and almost 100% of other species.

1.4. Is there a database of strandings?

No. Go to Question 1.6.

Yes. Continue to Question 1.5.

1.5. Is the data available online or downloadable on request?

No.

Yes.

Please provide details:

www.marinemammals.be, up to date to 2020

1.6. Provide details for any new institution(s) responsible for a stranding database, responding to live-strandings, collection of carcasses, and for conducting necropsies.

Necropsies are performed at the Universities of Ghent and Liège.

1.7. Were cases photographed, measured or sampled even if not collected for necropsy during the reporting period?

- No.
 Yes.

Please provide details:

Images available for >60% of stranded animals.

1.8. Were there recorded stranding events in your country during the reporting period?

- No.
 Yes.

How many strandings occurred? (Specify live and dead) 74 dead, 4 live

Please also provide more details in the table below.

Species	Region	Total animals stranded	Number of dead animals	Number of animals stranding alive	Response to live stranding (describe # of successful cases and methods used)
HP Harbour porpoise	OII Southern North Sea	78	74	4	All live stranded animals died quickly after stranding; some were transported to a rehab facility.
Choose an item.	Choose an item.				
Choose an item.	Choose an item.				

1.9. Were any necropsies conducted during the reporting period?

- No.
 Yes.

Please provide information below:

Standard protocol used; 30 harbour porpoises necropsied, but for some animals that remained uncollected a probable cause of death is known; 30 animals with a known cause of death: 15 killed directly or indirectly by grey seal, 3 bycaught, 12 infectious disease or starvation.

1.10. Other relevant new research/work/collaboration on strandings and stranding networks in your country.

List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

Section VII: Other Matters**A. Other information or comments important for the Agreement:¹****B. Difficulties in implementing the Agreement:**

¹ Opportunity to include other information relevant to the topics covered in this form but which are missing.



C. Burning issues:

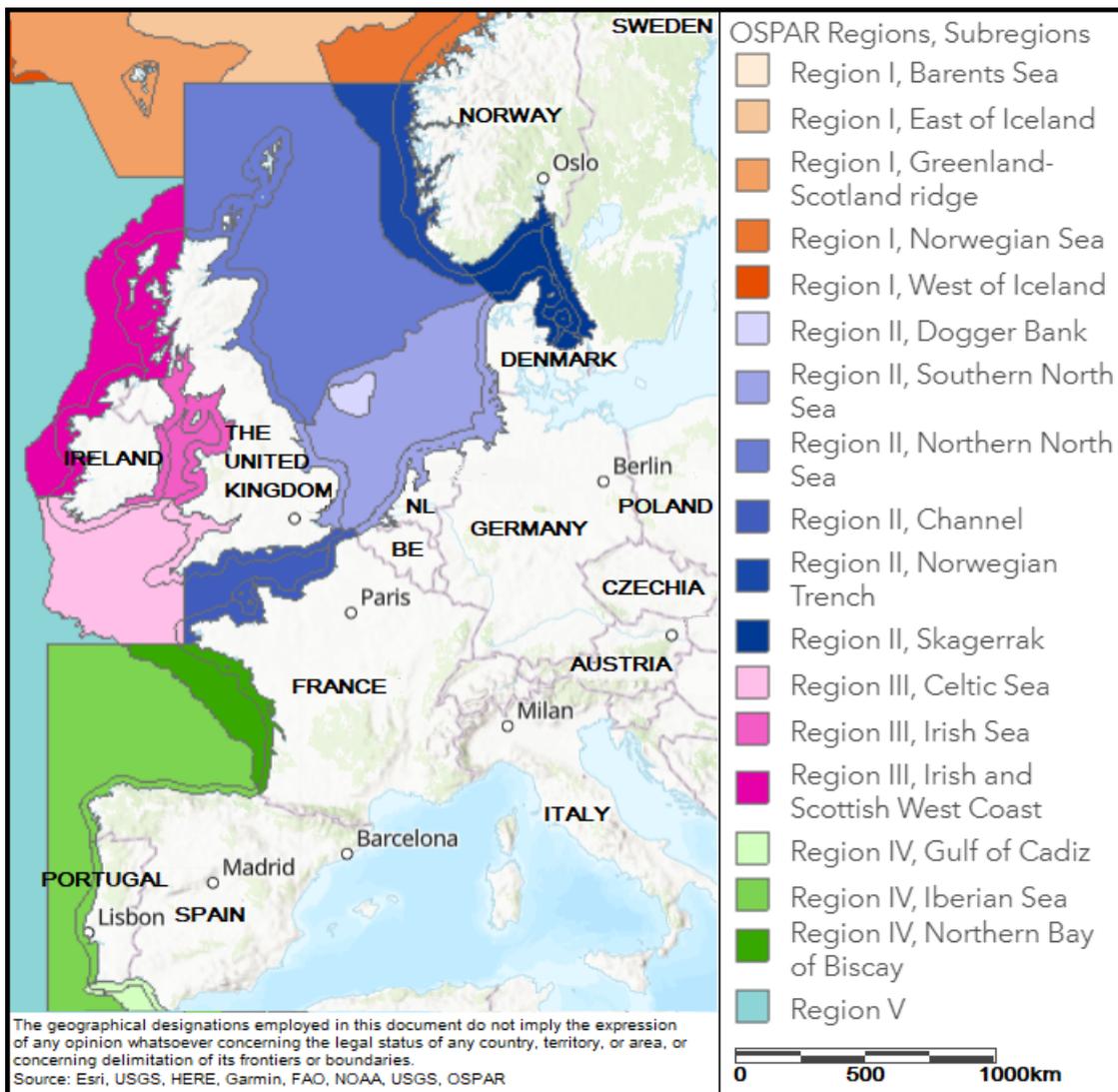
Negotiations ongoing within Belgium and with the Netherlands to find a suitable solution for the interventions in case of live stranded harbour porpoises and other small cetaceans.

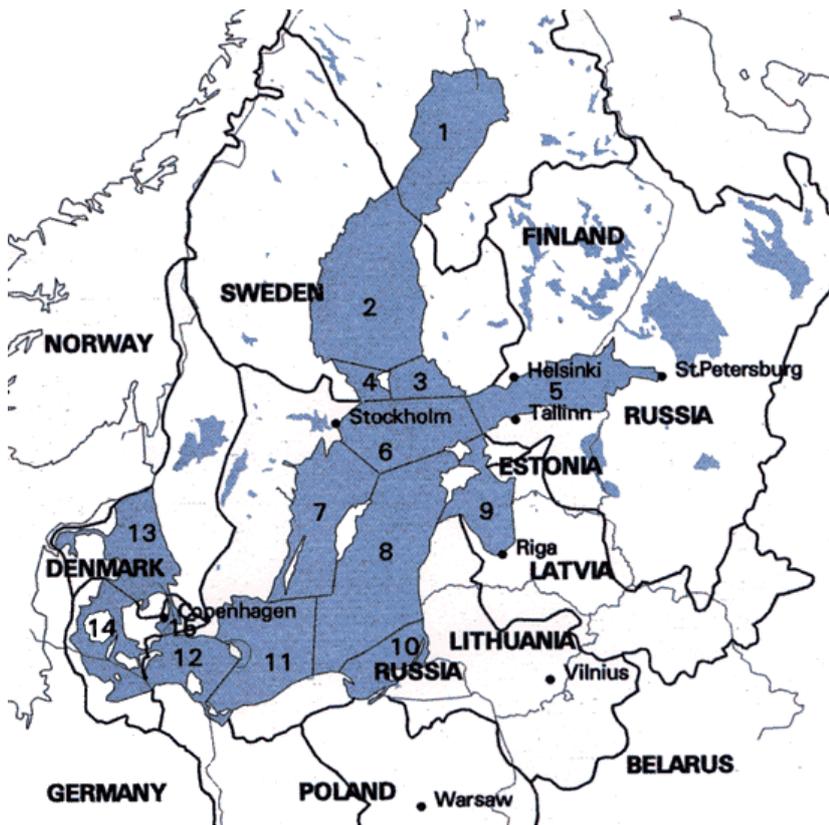
Annex A: Overview of the sub-regions as defined by OSPAR and HELCOM, and areas as defined by ICES.

Drop-down menu sub-regions OSPAR and HELCOM

Choose an item.

<p>OSPAR Region I Arctic Waters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Norwegian Sea <p>OSPAR Region II Greater North Sea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dogger Bank <input type="checkbox"/> Southern North Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Northern North Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Channel <input type="checkbox"/> Norwegian Trench <input type="checkbox"/> Skagerrak <p>OSPAR Region III Celtic Sea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Celtic Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Irish Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Irish & Scottish W. Coast 	<p>OSPAR Region IV Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> N. Bay of Biscay <input type="checkbox"/> Iberian Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Gulf of Cadiz <p>OSPAR Region V Wider Atlantic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <p>HELCOM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bothnian Bay <input type="checkbox"/> Bothnian Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Archipelago Sea <input type="checkbox"/> Åland Sea 	<p>HELCOM cont.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Gulf of Finland <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Baltic Proper <input type="checkbox"/> Western Gotland Basin <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Gotland Basin <input type="checkbox"/> Gulf of Riga <input type="checkbox"/> Gdansk Basin <input type="checkbox"/> Bornholm Basin <input type="checkbox"/> Arkona Basin <input type="checkbox"/> Kattegat <input type="checkbox"/> Belt Sea <input type="checkbox"/> The Sound
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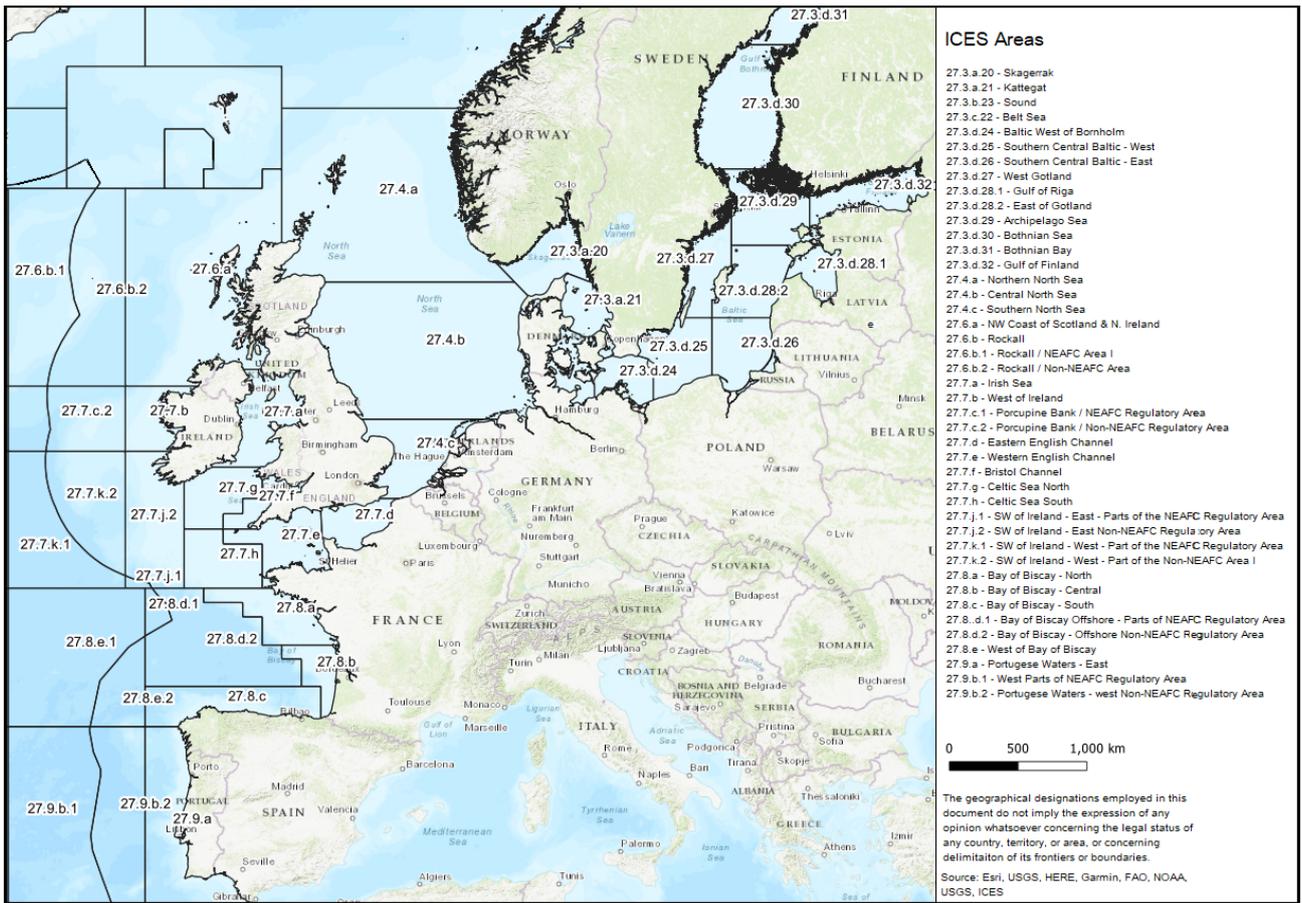
A map of the Baltic Sea drainage basins (catchment area), and marine subdivisions, including basins.

1. Bothnian Bay
2. Bothnian Sea
3. Archipelago Sea
4. Åland Sea
5. Gulf of Finland
6. Northern Baltic Proper
7. Western Gotland Basin
8. Eastern Gotland Basin
9. Gulf of Riga
10. Gdansk Basin
11. Bornholm Basin
12. Arkona Basin
13. Kattegat
14. Belt Sea
15. The Sound

Drop-down menu of ICES Areas

Choose an item.

Area	Area Description	Area	Area Description
27.3	Skagerrak, Kattegat, Sound, Belt and Baltic Seas	27.7.b	West of Ireland
27.3.a	Skagerrak and Kattegat	27.7.c	Porcupine Bank
27.3.a.20	Skagerrak	27.7.c.1	Porcupine Bank / NEAFC Reg. Area
27.3.a.21	Kattegat	27.7.c.2	Porcupine Bank / Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
27.3.b.c	Sound and Belt Sea	27.7.d	Eastern English Channel
27.3.b.23	Sound	27.7.e	Western English Channel
27.3.c.22	Belt Sea	27.7.f	Bristol Channel
27.3.d	Baltic Sea	27.7.g	Celtic North Sea
27.3.d.24	Baltic West of Bornholm	27.7.h	Celtic Sea South
27.3.d.25	Southern Central Baltic – West	27.7.j	SW of Ireland – East
27.3.d.26	Southern Central Baltic – East	27.7.j.1	SW of Ireland – East – Parts of the NEAFC Reg. Area
27.3.d.27	West of Gotland	27.7.j.2	SW of Ireland – East – Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
27.3.d.28.1	Gulf of Riga	27.7.k	SW of Ireland - West
27.3.d.28.2	East of Gotland	27.7.k.1	SW of Ireland – West – Part of the NEAFC Reg. Area
27.3.d.29	Archipelago Sea	27.7.k.2	SW of Ireland – West – Part of the Non-NEAFC Area I
27.3.d.30	Bothnian Sea	27.8	Bay of Biscay
27.3.d.31	Bothnian Bay	27.8.a	Bay of Biscay North
27.3.d.32	Bay of Finland	27.8.b	Bay of Biscay Central
27.4	North Sea	27.8.c	Bay of Biscay South
27.4.a	Northern North Sea	27.8.d	Bay of Biscay Offshore
27.4.b	Central North Sea	27.8.d.1	Bay of Biscay Offshore – Part of the NEAFC Reg. Area
27.4.c	Southern North Sea	27.8.d.2	Bay of Biscay Offshore – Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
27.6	Rockall, NW Coast of Scotland and N. Ireland	27.8.e	Wet of Bay of Biscay
27.6.a	NW Coast of Scotland and N. Ireland	27.9	Portuguese Waters
27.6.b	Rockall	27.9.a	Portuguese Waters – East
27.6.b.1	Rockall / NEAFC Reg. Area I	27.9.b	Portuguese Water - West
27.6.b.2	Rockall / Non-NEAFC Reg. Area	27.9.b.1	Portuguese waters – West Part of the NEAFC Reg. Area
27.7	Irish Sea, West of Ireland, Porcupine Bank, Eastern and Western English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea North and South, and Southwest of Ireland – East and West	27.9.b.2	Portuguese waters – Non-NEAFC Reg. Area
27.7.a	Irish Sea		



Annex B: Species covered by ASCOBANS

Code	Common name	Scientific name
AWSD	Atlantic white-sided dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>
BBW	Blainville's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon densirostris</i>
BD	Bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
CBW	Cuvier's beaked whale	<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>
CD	Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>
FKW	False killer whale	<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>
GBW	Gervais' beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon europaeus</i>
HP	Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>
KW	Killer Whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
LFPW	Long-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala melas</i>
NBW	Northern bottlenose whale	<i>Hyperoodon ampullatus</i>
PKW	Pygmy killer whale	<i>Feresa attenuata</i>
PSW	Pygmy sperm whale	<i>Kogia breviceps</i>
RD	Risso's dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>
RTD	Rough-toothed dolphin	<i>Steno bredanensis</i>
SBW	Sowerby's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon bidens</i>
SD	Striped dolphin	<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>
SFPW	Short-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>
TBW	True's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon mirus</i>
WBD	White-beaked dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>

Drop down menu small cetacean species:

Choose an item.