

ACTION POINTS

Jastarnia Plan

Bycatch Reduction

Agenda Item 3.1.1

- 1) ASCOBANS should urge relevant authorities to investigate ways of limiting part-time and recreational set-net fisheries. – Priority: High to medium, depending on area
- 2) With respect to recreational fisheries, Parties should work towards banning those types of gear known to pose a threat to harbour porpoises. – Priority: High
- 3) Parties should step up action to reduce fishing effort involving gear known to cause high porpoise bycatch rates as required under the Jastarnia Plan, and to provide information documenting the magnitude and location of such effort to ICES. – Priority: High
- 4) Finn Larsen and Sara Königson will present to the Jastarnia Group information on development of gillnet fishing effort in the Baltic Sea. – Priority: High
- 5) In order to achieve a favourable conservation status for Baltic harbour porpoises as required under the Habitats Directive, Parties should make concerted efforts to eliminate bycatch especially in current and future Natura 2000 sites (SACs) where harbour porpoises form part of the selection criteria. In these areas, this could be achieved by replacing set nets and introducing alternative gear that is considered less harmful. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 3.1.2

- 6) A small drafting group should develop briefing notes on ASCOBANS positions regarding bycatch, insofar as possible in consultation with the North Sea Group. These should be used by anyone representing ASCOBANS at Baltic ACs and other meetings of relevant EU and Baltic Sea bodies in order to maintain a consistent and appropriate approach. – Priority: Medium
- 7) Parties should establish national processes to develop guidelines and methods for reducing and monitoring bycatch in the relevant fisheries, as called for in Jastarnia Plan Recommendation 2, and to report on progress in achieving this. – Priority: High
- 8) A targeted approach to involving stakeholders such as fishermen and fisheries organizations should be adopted. Jastarnia Group Members and the Secretariat should make efforts to encourage fisheries organizations to participate in the Jastarnia Group Meetings. – Priority: High
- 9) Parties should involve stakeholders, including fishermen and fisheries organizations, and urge them to accept responsibility for eliminating the potential risk of bycatch in gillnets and to take the necessary actions to obtain this goal. One way of making this into a positive market force is to develop a green policy for the fisheries, promoting a “porpoise free fish” label. In such a process it is recommended to seek advice from similar label initiatives on the market and to integrate this green policy into the public relations and awareness campaigns discussed below. – Priority: High
- 10) Parties are encouraged to make funding available for a consultant to advise on a) whether a “porpoise free fish” label would best be managed nationally, regionally, ASCOBANS-wide or in another manner, and b) how best to devise an operating system for such a label assuring the appropriate reception by markets, transparency and clarity of the labelling process. – Priority: Medium

Agenda Item 3.1.3

- 11) Parties should undertake or continue efforts to test and implement pots, traps and other porpoise-friendly gear. Parties are encouraged to report to the Jastarnia Group on related initiatives or research even where the intention is not primarily the conservation of marine mammals. – Priority: High
- 12) The Jastarnia Group recommends that the Secretariat approach the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and other similar certification organizations to urge them to prioritize bycatch of cetaceans in the evaluation criteria applied for certifying fisheries and to promote porpoise-friendly fishing gear and other mitigation measures as described in the Jastarnia Plan. (*see also Agenda Item 7.2.1*) – Priority: High
- 13) Parties should promote research on the development of new porpoise-safe fishing gear. Included in the responsibility of the stakeholders for mitigating bycatch is the active participation in this research and development. The implementation of resulting new fishing gear can be considerably facilitated by including the new gear in a green label, e.g. as outlined above, since it will increase acceptance of a higher value of the catch, which in turn would serve as an incitement for the fishermen to adopt the new gear. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 3.1.4

- 14) Parties are reminded to implement urgently the pinger use recommended in the Jastarnia Plan, which calls for pingers to be made mandatory in probable high-risk areas and fisheries associated with bycatch of harbour porpoises on a short-term basis irrespective of vessel size. In the meantime, Parties must develop long-term measures to mitigate bycatch, such as alternative fishing gear.¹ – Priority: High
- 15) Parties should ensure more monitoring and enforcement of pinger use. – Priority: High

Research and Monitoring

Agenda Item 3.2.1

- 16) Parties are urged to continue to submit, as they become available, all results on genetic, morphological and other biological research dealing with the stock identity of Baltic porpoises, including results from ongoing relevant studies. – Priority: Medium

Agenda Item 3.2.2

- 17) ASCOBANS and the Parties should explore the possibility of co-funding and/or otherwise supporting dedicated follow-up studies for SAMBAH, among other things with a view to assessing trends. – Priority: High
- 18) The monitoring of population developments should be considered an ongoing project that should continue for many years to come. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 3.2.3

- 19) Parties should promote studies on alternative fishing gear, the development of pingers not audible to seals, and alerting devices other than pingers. – Priority: High

¹ This recommendation may be subject to review dependent on the outcome of the revision of the Jastarnia Plan.

Agenda Item 3.2.4

- 20) Germany issued recommendations on the reduction of sound emissions associated with construction of offshore wind farms and set an upper limit for pile driving operations. This good example and the results of current studies should be reflected both in the national legislation of Parties and in the relevant indicators for Good Environmental Status to be developed for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. – Priority: High
- 21) Parties are invited to commission research on whether pingers or other alerting or harassment devices cause undue habitat exclusion and habituation. – Priority: Medium
- 22) Parties and the Joint CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Noise Working Group are asked to give special consideration to the particular requirements such as the sound propagation conditions in the Baltic and the conservation status of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise with regard to mitigating the impact of anthropogenic noise on porpoises, such as the destruction through explosion of old ammunition or during the construction of sea bed pipelines, seismic surveys, as well as pile-driving for wind turbines. – Priority: High
- 23) Parties are asked to undertake baseline studies of underwater noise in their respective waters as a reference point for future impact assessments. – Priority: Medium
- 24) Parties should investigate possible detrimental effects of various types of sound and disturbance on harbour porpoises (including pinger signals, noise from vessels, seismic surveys, wind parks or construction). Parties should initiate and support studies on the effect of anthropogenic noise on the harbour porpoise both on the individual and on a population level. – Priority: Medium
- 25) More research should be conducted on the behaviour of harbour porpoises near pingers. – Priority: Medium

Agenda Item 3.2.5

- 26) Parties should consider the recommendations of the October 2015 ASCOBANS Workshop on REM and implement this technique for bycatch monitoring as appropriate in the national context. – Priority: High
- 27) Bearing in mind the Parties' commitments under the Habitats Directive and EC Regulation 812/2004, Parties are required to establish a system to monitor bycatch on all vessels regardless of size. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 3.2.6

- 28) Parties should promote studies on alternative fishing gear. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 3.2.7

- 29) Based on a standardised reporting format, the Secretariat should ask Parties to provide information as to the definitions of the term 'fisheries', and rules and regulations applicable to the various types of fisheries in their national legislation. This information should be provided in time for the next JG meeting. – Priority: Low

Agenda Item 3.2.8

- 30) Parties should continue to explore the possibility of a joint monitoring effort and to promote the collection of data at the sub-regional and local levels based on the methods adopted by SAMBAH. Progress should be reviewed in 2017. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 3.2.9

- 31) Parties should continue to collect data on the extent of ghost nets in their waters, including net types and locations. Regular assessments should then be made of the total quantities of nets lost or discarded, taking account of the distribution of different types of fisheries. – Priority: Medium

- 32) Taking into consideration the future requirements under the MSFD, Parties should continue to implement measures to prevent the loss of fishing gear, and mitigation measures for ghost nets, such as regular clean-ups, provision of disposal containers at ports, deposit systems, mandatory reporting of lost gear, marking of nets etc. Wherever possible fishing communities and other relevant stakeholders should be actively involved. Periodic reviews of progress should be conducted by the JG. – Priority: High

Marine Protected Areas

Agenda Item 3.3

- 33) Parties, Range States and NGOs seeking to develop management plans for SACs and MPAs designated for harbour porpoises are encouraged to make use of the expertise available within the Jastarnia Group, and to consult or cooperate with other Parties that are in the process of developing or have developed management plans. – Priority: Low
- 34) Parties are strongly encouraged to use the data provided by SAMBAH, in particular in connection with the establishment of management plans for SACs and MPAs for harbour porpoises, as well as with regard to mitigation measures. – Priority: High

Public Awareness

Agenda Item 3.4

- 35) Each country is encouraged to designate one website for reporting of sightings and strandings by the public. The Secretariat should place the URLs on the ASCOBANS website. – Priority: High
- 36) There should be an exchange of information between the sighting and stranding databases as appropriate. GIS referenced data should be submitted to HELCOM regularly. – Priority: High
- 37) Parties should establish sightings and strandings programmes, preferably in a coordinated fashion for all Baltic Sea States. They should consider initiating sightings days or weeks, comparable to the National Whale and Dolphin Watch in the UK. They should also consider developing a sightings and strandings app for smartphones. – Priority: High
- 38) Information on the impacts of anthropogenic pressures (bycatch, noise, pollution, disturbance etc.) on cetaceans should be made available on the ASCOBANS website. The Jastarnia Group is invited to provide comments and suggestions for improvement of the existing pages. – Priority: Medium

Cooperation

Agenda Item 3.5

- 39) The recommendations of the Jastarnia Group should be forwarded to all relevant organisations active in the Baltic. – Priority: Medium
- 40) Parties are urged to ensure that calls for participation in the Jastarnia Group are relayed to the environmental and fisheries organizations in their respective countries. – Priority: Medium
- 41) Parties are strongly encouraged to fulfil their obligations under the current Regulation 812/2004 and the Habitats Directive. – Priority: High

- 42) Parties should convey positions agreed within ASCOBANS, such as those available at http://www.ascobans.org/sites/default/files/basic_page_documents/ASCOBANS_Recommendations_EUBycatchLegislation_Final.pdf to the appropriate fora at the European level. – Priority: High
- 43) Parties are urged to provide all relevant data to the HELCOM harbour porpoise database. – Priority: Medium
- 44) Parties should designate contact persons dealing with the Baltic Harbour Porpoise Database operated by HELCOM. The Secretariat should remind Parties that have not yet done so (Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) to provide the details of these contact persons to the Secretariats of ASCOBANS and HELCOM. – Priority: High
- 45) The Secretariat should collaborate with HELCOM SEAL to obtain data on harbour porpoise strandings in the Russian territories of the Baltic Sea. – Priority: Medium
- 46) The Jastarnia Group acknowledges the progress regarding the cooperation between the Jastarnia Group and relevant meetings of HELCOM. The Jastarnia Group promotes further cooperation with HELCOM SEAL and will strive to cooperate with the HELCOM Fish Group. Further, HELCOM should continue to be invited to take part in the Jastarnia Group meetings. – Priority: High
- 47) The Jastarnia Group should step up cooperation with the Baltic Advisory Committee. – Priority: High
- 48) The Secretariat and Parties should continually contact fisheries organizations to make them aware of the importance of recovering bycaught animals. – Priority: High

Cross-Cutting Issues

Agenda Item 5.1

- 49) In light of the positive experience with the North Sea Coordinator, the Jastarnia Group recommends that the Parties ensure that a Baltic Sea Coordinator, or a joint coordinator for both regions, possibly attached to the Secretariat, be appointed. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 5.2

- 50) Coordinating Authorities of the countries hosting the Group's meetings are asked to ensure the attendance of an expert on the CFP at the respective meetings of the Group. The Secretariat should recall this recommendation to the Coordinating Authority of the host country in good time before the meeting. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 5.3

- 51) Parties should consider supporting any projects relevant for achieving the aims of the Jastarnia Plan. – Priority: High
- 52) Parties and NGOs are requested to ensure that the results of all relevant projects are made available to ASCOBANS. – Priority: High
- 53) Parties are encouraged to use SAMBAH results for harbour porpoise conservation in the Baltic Sea. – Priority: High
- 54) In view of the SAMBAH results and the requirement for regular reviews and updates of both the Jastarnia Plan and the WBBK Plan, a timely revision of the WBBK Plan is required. Parties are urged to provide the necessary funding. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 8

- 55) Parties are encouraged to take turns hosting the meetings of the Jastarnia Group and to ensure that the necessary funding for this purpose is made available. The Secretariat should prepare a general overview of related costs to be expected. – Priority: High

Western Baltic, Belt Seas and Kattegat Plan

Involvement of Stakeholders

Agenda Item 6.1.1

- 56) The Secretariat, making use of a simple questionnaire, should request Parties to provide an overview of measures currently ongoing in their countries actively to engage fishing communities and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Plan, in order to identify existing gaps and lessons learnt of interest to all Parties. – Priority: Medium
- 57) Noting the successful Natura 2000 dialogue forums conducted in Denmark, Parties are encouraged to consider establishing a similar format for the stakeholder working group required under Objective a. of the Plan. – Priority: High

Mitigation of Bycatch

Agenda Item 6.2.1

- 58) The Secretariat will enquire with Parties regarding steps taken to develop their joint recommendations to the European Commission regarding the management of harbour porpoise SACs to minimize bycatch rates within these areas. – Priority: High
- 59) The Secretariat should relay the Jastarnia Group's request for advice as to whether the revised MSC assessment standards meet ASCOBANS' requirements to the Bycatch Working Group. – Priority: High
- 60) ASCOBANS should seek to influence existing eco-labelling programmes to take full account of the need to avoid cetacean bycatch in certifying fisheries. In the case of MSC, the Secretariat is requested to liaise directly with the organization in order to determine the appropriate means of influencing their eco-labelling programmes. – Priority: Medium
- 61) The Secretariat should invite an MSC representative to the next Jastarnia Group meeting. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 6.2.2

- 62) Parties are strongly encouraged to take all necessary steps to achieve as soon as possible agreement to implement immediately the use of pingers in gillnet fishery associated with bycatch irrespective of vessel size or type, as provided for in the Plan, and to enforce the use of pingers. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 6.2.3

- 63) Parties should continue to provide funding for research on alternative fishing gear and practices as needed. – Priority: High

Assessment of Bycatch Level

Agenda Item 6.3.1

- 64) Parties are encouraged to undertake or promote research regarding bycatch estimation.
– Priority: High

Population Status

Agenda Item 6.4.1

- 65) Parties are strongly encouraged to continue to undertake and cooperate on inter-SCANS surveys of the Western Baltic (gap area) harbour porpoise population and evaluate trends in population density and abundance. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 6.4.2

- 66) Parties are strongly encouraged to coordinate and standardize their monitoring efforts and determine the number of stranded or bycaught animals to be collected for necropsies in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat by means of the coordination group established in 2016. – Priority: High
- 67) The Secretariat will contact the members of the necropsy coordination group to discuss their mode of operation and the facilitation of the group. – Priority: High
- 68) The animals collected should be necropsied and examined with regard to health status, contaminant load and causes of mortality. The resultant data should be fed into a common database, such as the future database required under MOP Resolution 7.4. – Priority: High

Habitat Quality

Agenda Item 6.5.1

- 69) Parties should continue to provide funding for research on non-detrimental use of acoustic devices and possible habitat exclusion through pingers. – Priority: High

Agenda Item 6.5.2

- 70) Parties should promote research on the consequences of impacts on prey communities for harbour porpoises. – Priority: Medium

Agenda Item 6.5.3

- 71) The Secretariat should ask Jacob Nabe-Nielsen of Aarhus University, the leader of the project “Disturbance Effects on the Harbour Porpoise Population in the North Sea” (DEPONS), to attend the next meeting of the Jastarnia Group as an invited expert. – Priority: High
- 72) Parties should ensure baseline studies and continual monitoring with regard to potential effects of activities with an impact on harbour porpoise behaviour and distribution. Research is also required on the context in which porpoises are using the habitats. – Priority: High