

30th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Bonn, Germany, 1–3 September 2026
Agenda Item 5.2

**ASCOBANS POSITION ON USE OF DATA DERIVED FROM
DELIBERATELY KILLED SMALL CETACEANS**

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

1. The 29th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (AC29) agreed that ASCOBANS organize a workshop or workshops at this year's European Cetacean Society (ECS) conference (see [AC29/AP34](#)). After the conference theme was announced, the title of the workshop was formed to *Building Knowledge, Building Action: Atlantic White-sided and White-beaked Dolphins*¹. It was co-organized with Peter Evans (Sea Watch Foundation & Bangor University), Carl Kinze (Zoology Museum of Copenhagen), and Marianne Rasmussen (University of Iceland). Mr. Evans also chaired the workshop, which took place on 21 April 2026 in Dundee, Scotland, UK.
2. Since then, the ASCOBANS Secretariat has been copied in two emails – one addressed to the workshop Chair and one to ECS Chair – that raised concerns about a presentation, including data derived from hunted dolphins, given by representatives of NAMMCO and the Faroe Islands, at this workshop. These emails criticized the use of data from hunted animals, and stated that by allowing its use, this data “seemed to be welcomed through ECS and ASCOBANS”.
3. This issue has been discussed, but not resolved, in the ASCOBANS context before. There was a discussion at AC23 (2017) regarding cooperation between ASCOBANS and NAMMCO – see [AC23 Report](#) (paragraphs 181-198 and 242-243). Some countries said cooperation should be possible with strong TOR, some countries were against or were sceptical. One country advocated deferring the decisions to MOP, given political sensitivities. Ultimately, it was not resolved.
4. Use of such data was brought up at AC26 (2021), referring to an ethical issue about where scientists get their samples from. There was no decision on how to proceed, other than agreeing that the Intersessional WG on Lagenorhynchus species would *not* consider the issue – see [AC26 Report](#) (paragraphs 131-133).
5. Having consulted the AC Chair and Vice-Chair in May 2026, the Secretariat communicated the above issue to ASCOBANS National Coordinators later that month, suggesting it be discussed at AC30 to elaborate an ASCOBANS position.
6. To aid these discussions, below is a summary of arguments brought forth for or against using data derived from deliberately killed small cetaceans to inform work of the Agreement.
 - a) Arguments against using such data:
 - Publishing and utilizing such data may appear to validate the practice, providing a justification for continued killing.

¹ <https://www.ascobans.org/meeting/ecs-ascobans-workshop-building-knowledge-building-action-atlantic-white-sided-and-white>

- Accepting such data may compromise scientific integrity by crossing moral boundaries regarding the welfare of highly intelligent, sentient, social mammals.
- Many leading scientific journals may reject studies utilizing data from intentionally killed cetaceans, limiting the utility of the data to the global scientific community.
- Data derived from localized herding and mass-killing events (like those in the Faroes) may introduce a sampling bias and statistical uncertainty into population models. These drives often wipe out entire familial pods indiscriminately, which does not provide a required randomized representation of the wider, wide-ranging North Atlantic small cetacean populations.

b) Arguments for using such data:

- The hunts that take place in the Faroes are communal hunts for local human consumption. Utilizing data does not legitimize the activity, and has never been presented as if it does.
- The animals have already been killed – destroying or ignoring the data means their deaths serve no purpose at all.
- Long-term datasets relying on historical catch data require consistent, continuous sampling methods to accurately track population trends over decades – especially important for species where there is little data available. That material can lead to better informed conservation actions.
- Focusing only upon the animals at certain part of their range is not going to help them survive as a species.

Action requested:

7. The Advisory Committee is invited to discuss and decide whether to agree a position on the usage of data derived from deliberately killed small cetaceans in an ASCOBANS context.