

Agenda Item 14.1.2

Implementation of the ASCOBANS Triennial
Work Plan (2007-2009)

ASCOBANS Baltic Recovery Plan (Jastarnia
Plan)

Outcome of 4th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group

Document 40

**The Finnish Proposal for Amending
Jastarnia Group's Contribution**

Action Requested

- take note of the information submitted
- comment

Submitted by

Finland



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

The Finnish proposal for amending Jastarnia Group's contribution

In reviewing Council Regulation 812/2004 for the Baltic Sea, the Jastarnia Group invites the Advisory Committee of ASCOBANS to suggest to the European Commission:

- In the light and experience of most recent studies it should be considered the introduction of mandatory use of pingers as an interim measure in all gillnet or entangling net fisheries being a risk to cetaceans (i.e. harbour porpoise), regardless of vessel size, not only in ICES area III sub-division 24, but also in ICES III –subdivisions 21-23 and 25-26. When introducing a comprehensive pinger scheme, take account of the objectives for by-catch mitigation laid down in the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan and ensure that a medium term time line (not exceeding three years) is adopted for the achievement of these goals. Furthermore, the potentially negative side effects of pingers on cetaceans need to be studied, and their use and effectiveness need to be monitored simultaneously by on-board observers.
- The testing and introduction of alternative fishing gear should be speeded up, in order to make it possible to phase out gillnets in high-risk areas as soon as possible.
- An effective small cetaceans by-catch monitoring programme should be set in place and made mandatory for all vessels (including vessels below 15m), wherever feasible, reinforcing already existing provisions. Recreational and other part-time fisheries should be addressed in a similar fashion. This should also include areas where pingers are used, to evaluate the effectiveness of this mitigation method. Where human observers are not possible, appropriate electronic surveillance or another comprehensive monitoring providing data of equal quality should be conducted urgently. In addition to independent monitoring, comprehensive reporting of by-catch by fishermen should be encouraged.

Reasoning:

In the principle of proportionality there is no reason to introduce a pinger program neither observer monitoring programs in the northern Baltic Sea, where harbour porpoises are utmost rare and the occurrence and the densities of porpoises are very close to zero. Finnish two year observer program (5 % of fishing effort) gave a 0-result of by-catches and observations. In the Finnish waters there are yearly only 0 – 5 general public sighting announcements of harbour porpoises in the portal of porpoises established by the Finnish Ministry of Environment.

The protection of migrating harbour porpoises in the Northern Baltic waters needs special measures. One of the options could be a local warning system. If there is a sighting of porpoise in certain area the local fishermen (including recreational fishermen) could be informed by newspapers and radio to have a chance to react on the risk of to get a by-catch of a porpoise. Such an approach would also lead on a positive protection atmosphere among general public and fishermen in situations where harbour porpoises are very rare visitors.