

Agenda Item 7.1

Publicity and Outreach

Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and  
Partners

**Document 7.1**

**Report of the Secretariat on Outreach  
Activities**

**Action Requested**

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Secretariat



## REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

1. This report has been developed in response to [Resolution 9.1 Work Plan for the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee and Secretariat 2021-2024](#) > Work Plan Activity 48, which requests the Secretariat to report on outreach and communication matters at each meeting of the Advisory Committee. This document reports on activities by the Secretariat since the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties (MOP9), noting also the updated Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan that was endorsed by MOP9 ([ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.5.3](#)), and [Resolution 5.8 Educational and Promotional Activities](#) (2006).

### Public Events

2. The ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award was granted for the sixth time in 2020. The Secretariat sought nominations and a jury formed by AC25 selected the winner. The winner was 'Marine Mammals Science Education': an EU-funded project, which aims to engage young people in natural science to prevent future shortages of specialists in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The winner was announced at MOP9. The aim of the award is to recognize individuals or organizations that have contributed to promoting and supporting educational activities and to increasing public awareness to achieve a better understanding of the need to conserve small cetaceans.
3. The 19<sup>th</sup> International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) was on 16 May 2021. The IDBHP aims to promote public support through (national) institutions staging various events and exhibitions at museums and scientific institutions around the Baltic Sea. A month in advance, the Secretariat sent an email invitation to ASCOBANS Range States and relevant institutions around the Baltic Sea to participate, offering to make available information and materials to support events. Organisers were invited to register their events via the ASCOBANS Facebookpage and to send reports and pictures.
4. While the Secretariat acknowledged that restrictions owing to COVID-19 likely limited organising events, the following reports were received:
  - The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) Secretariat made an [announcement](#) and posted a [video address](#) by their Executive Secretary. HELCOM also created an [Info Page](#) dedicated especially for the day.
  - The Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union, Germany (NABU) issued a [press release](#) on concerning underwater noise (blasting of ammunition) disturbance, amongst others.
5. IDBHP was also promoted via the ASCOBANS website and Facebook page, and several others posted about IDBHP in social media. These included Coalition Clean Baltic, Convention on Migratory Species, DAN (Divers Alert Network) Europe, Kiel Munition Clearance Week 2021, WWF Baltic Programme, and WWF Sweden, to mention a few. It is hoped that, ultimately, the IDBHP will be observed by at least one notable institution in every country around the Baltic Sea.

### Meetings and Scientific Conferences

6. The 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties was the first ever governing-body meeting in the CMS Family of instruments that was held online. MOP9 made it to the IISD report [State of Global Environmental Governance 2020](#), under heading 'Going Online' > 'Full Speed (and Agenda) Ahead'. Seven news items were published on the ASCOBANS website in the run-up to MOP9, and one was published once the meeting had concluded.

7. On 10-12 February 2021, the ASCOBANS Secretariat hosted the [1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS](#), online. Day 1 and Day 2 of the meeting, with a number of interesting presentations, were open to observers such as national and regional fisheries representatives and other interested stakeholders. One-hundred-and-fifty people from 34 countries attended. A related news item can be found [here](#). Outcomes will be presented under agenda item 2.5. and are available on the relevant [meeting page](#).
8. ASCOBANS [Workshop on Management of Marine Protected Areas for Small Cetaceans](#) took place online on 18 May and 7-9 June 2021. Due to the interactive nature of the workshop, participation was by invitation. The purpose of the workshop was to act as an open brainstorming session, allowing for innovative ideas rather than focusing on restrictions, in a group of experts on cetaceans, experts on threats to cetaceans, and MPA managers. The workshop was jointly organized by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, WWF Germany, WWF Sweden, CCB and the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process, and ASCOBANS. Outcomes will be presented under agenda item 2.5. and will be made available on the [workshop page](#).
9. On 10 June 2021, the Secretariat, together with the Chairs of the Jastarnia and North Sea Groups, attended the joint technical meeting of the Baltic and NANSEA (North Atlantic, North Sea & Eastern Arctic) Fisheries Regional Coordination Groups. We gave a joint presentation with HELCOM, introducing ASCOBANS and the Jastarnia Group, and the HELCOM Roadmap on fisheries data. The presentation also included items for discussion to improve bycatch monitoring of protected, endangered, and threatened species (PETS). A separate presentation was given by Chair of the North Sea Group on bycatch issues in the whole ASCOBANS Area.

### Electronic Media

10. Website: The Secretariat continued to maintain the ASCOBANS [website](#), regularly uploading content, adjusting the format depending on content needs and sharing news. Eighteen news items were posted on the ASCOBANS website in 2020, and 13 in 2021, at the time of posting this document. Content updates are required on an ongoing basis, but dependent on staff capacity. With the support from an intern, some of the species pages were updated according to the information in the ASCOBANS anniversary book *European Whales, Dolphins, and Porpoises* (Evans 2019). At the time of writing, the ASCOBANS Kids webpage was not available for technical reasons, but the issue is expected to be solved soon
11. Due to technological requirements, a major upgrade of CMS Family-wide websites is necessary to improve functionality and to enhance security. The upgrade has started this year, with the latest content management technology (Drupal 9) and is expected to be delivered by the end of 2021.
12. Facebook: Posts on activities have also been shared on the ASCOBANS [Facebook page](#). The Secretariat has shared, for example, updates from relevant meetings, general news stories of relevance to small cetaceans in the Agreement area, and news items related to threats to cetaceans. Thirty-two posts were shared in 2020, and 29 in 2021 at the time of posting this document. The post with most reach in 2020 was the news about MOP9 concluding (ca. 1,300 people). In 2021 so far, the ad about an internship in the CMS Aquatic Species Team (including ASCOBANS) has had the most reach (844 people), followed by the news about the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Joint Bycatch Working Group of ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS.
13. Newsletter: In December 2020, the Secretariat revived the ASCOBANS [Newsletter](#), which compiled leading news items from the past year. The Newsletter was sent to all contacts in the ASCOBANS database, including Parties, non-Party Range States, Approved Observer Organisation, and other observers.

## Publications and Information Material

14. Publications: in September 2021 the Secretariat published a report [Monitoring Cetacean Bycatch: An Analysis of Different Methods Aboard Commercial Fishing Vessels](#)<sup>1</sup>, commissioned by the Secretariat as requested by AC24. The report, authored by Grant P. Course, reviews, describes, and evaluates the different monitoring options that are available for obtaining counts of the number of cetacean bycatches that occur in European fisheries. The report also lists possible recommendations and future developments related to the use of REM as a monitoring tool for ETP (endangered, threatened, protected species) bycatch. The report also launched ASCOBANS Technical Series, which aims to highlight technical and scientific reports and studies commissioned by ASCOBANS. Another report, also requested by AC24, on mitigation measures in fisheries with high bycatch and authored by Fiona L. Read, is expected to be published in the coming weeks.
15. Information Material: As in the past, and in line with Parties' instructions through the Work Plan, the Secretariat has continued to distribute information material upon request. The material – such as brochures, postcards, leaflets, pens, bags – is being used throughout the Agreement Area during ASCOBANS events and those by other institutions. Most of these can be found in pdf-version on the [ASCOBANS website](#). The Secretariat received only a couple of requests for materials during this reporting period, likely owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has prevented organising events in many ASCOBANS Range States.
16. Exhibition Material:
  - ASCOBANS Exhibition and Threat banners: [The Whale Workshop](#) continues presenting inflatable, life-sized models of cetaceans and other marine life in the Agreement Area in all its shows, also showing an English version of the ten-banner exhibition about the Secretariat and its functions. Another English version of the ASCOBANS exhibition and all five threat banners are on display in the Lithuanian Sea Museum in Vilnius.
  - 'Die Letzten 300': ['The Last 300' -exhibition](#) comprises art and design work submitted for a creativity competition organised by Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), NABU, and OceanCare in partnership with ASCOBANS Secretariat in 2013, targeting German-speaking areas. The Secretariat currently stores this exhibition in the UN building in Bonn, Germany. The majority of exhibits is available for interested institutions and organisations to display.
17. Season's Greetings card: In 2020, the Secretariat advertised the Season's Greetings card competition on its Facebook page, as in a few previous years, but received not entries. Thus the 2020 card was produced in-house. This year, the ASCOBANS Secretariat reached out to the Independent Bonn International School (IBIS) which will organise the Season's Greetings card competition within the school. The winner will be announced on the ASCOBANS website and Facebook page in December 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Also posted as [ASCOBANS/AC26/Inf.2.5b](#) for the current meeting.