

Agenda Item 2

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

Document NR 8/Rev.1

**2020 Annual National Report:
Lithuania**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Lithuania



ASCOBANS

2020 ASCOBANS National Report

The deadline for the submission of National Reports is **31 March 2021**.

As outlined in ASCOBANS Resolution 8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting, this form will cover the year 2020 (Year 1), and the following topics included in the Annex to the Resolution, in addition to the standard Sections I (General Information) and VII (Other Matters):

- Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping) (Section II B3)
- Ocean Energy (Section II B4)
- Unexploded Ordnance (Section II C8)
- Marine Spatial Planning (Section II D15)

The national reports submitted will inform discussions at the 26th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (8-12 November 2021).

- All questions apply to the reporting period of 1 January - 31 December 2020.
- 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 list provided, based on ASCOBANS species list, see **Annex B**.
- Throughout the form, please include relevant web links where applicable.

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 2020 (Year 1), what does this report reveal about:

The most successful aspects of implementation of the Agreement?(List up to five items)

>>> The public awareness and interest to small cetaceans (mainly harbour porpoise) has significantly increased during the period when Lithuania has been Party to ASCOBANS.

The greatest challenges in implementing the Agreement? (List up to five items)

>>> 1) Lack of human resources, especially for researchers
2) lack of financial resources
3) lack of infrastructure

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

>>> To involve the Lithuanian Maritime Museum in the activities when the Baltic Sea Animal Rehabilitation Center is built, to strive for the collection of information and the necessary research on the harbour porpoise.

I. General Information

A. Country Information

Name of Party / Non-Party Range State:

>>> Lithuania

Details of the Report Compiler

Name:

>>> Ieva Čaraitė

Function:

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Does the Report Compiler act as ASCOBANS National Coordinator (i.e. focal point)?

Yes

Details of contributor(s)

Please provide the following details per contributor:

Topic(s) contributed to, Name, Function, Organization, Postal Address, Telephone, and Email.

>>> Topic contributed: II - 3. Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping), Donatas Bagočius, Chief Desk Officer, Environmental protection agency, +370 46 410426, donatas.bagocius@aaa.am.lt.

Topic contributed: II - 8. Unexploded Ordnance, Linas Janauskas, mayor, Lithuanian army, Šv. Ignoto g. 8, LT-01144 Vilnius, +370 5 219 6432, linas.janauskas@mil.lt.

Topic contributed: II - 15. Marine Spatial Planning, Edvardas Minkevičius, Chief Desk Officer, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, A. Jakšto str. 4, LT-01005 Vilnius, Lithuania, +370 6 1445323, edvardas.minkevicius@am.lt.

II. Habitat Conservation and Management (threats and pressures on cetaceans)

B. Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)

3. Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating negative effects on small cetaceans from underwater noise during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 9.2, 9.1, 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.6, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, 6.2, 6.1

Small cetaceans are especially susceptible to underwater noise due to their high responsiveness to sound and wide hearing range. Good environmental status, as defined by the European Union, suggests that the introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment. Anthropogenic noise pollution has generally increased in recent times and generates a broad range of frequencies due to a wide variety of human activities. Impulsive and continuous noise present different impacts on small cetaceans, which include communicative masking, behavioural response and physiological injury. Noise in marine environments potentially impedes communication, affects distribution and hence feeding and reproduction of small cetaceans. Studies show that not only cetaceans but also fish and other marine life may be negatively impacted by anthropogenic noise.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on implementation of measures through a number of resolutions that (1) highlight the potential impact that noise pollution may have on small cetaceans in the Agreement Area and (2) commit to reduce the pressure presented by underwater noise. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures.

To better understand the extent to which noise negatively impacts the health of small cetaceans, and to learn about new work relevant to the topic, countries are requested to provide related information.

3.1. To which noise registers/databases has your country contributed to date?

ICES Impulsive Noise Register (for HELCOM and OSPAR Parties)

Yes

National Registry

Yes, please specify (e.g. JNCC noise registry):

Other

No

3.2. Any instances/issues in the reporting period including information on planned or completed significant developments/activities, including the details of monitoring in place before, during and after the project.

If you selected 'Yes', please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

Yes. Please provide details in the table.

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

[Sec-II B 3.2 0.xlsx](#)

3.3. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on underwater noise in your country.

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

>>> Bagočius, D. (2013). Underwater noise generated by the detonation of historical ordnance in the Baltic Sea, Lithuania: potential ecological impacts on marine life. *Baltica*, 26(2), 187-192;

Bagočius, D. (2014). Potential masking of the Baltic grey seal vocalisations by underwater shipping noise in the Lithuanian area of the Baltic Sea. *Environmental Research, Engineering and Management*, 70(4), 66-72;

Bagočius, D., & Narščius, A. (2017). Underwater noise modelling in Lithuanian area of the Baltic Sea.

Mokslas-Lietuvos ateitis/Science-Future of Lithuania, 9(4), 393-399;

Bagočius, D., & Narščius, A. (2018). Simplistic underwater ambient noise modelling for shallow coastal areas: Lithuanian area of the Baltic Sea. *Ocean Engineering*, 164, 521-528;

Bagočius, D., & Narščius, A. (2019). Underwater noise level predictions of ammunition explosions in the shallow area of Lithuanian Baltic Sea. *Environmental pollution*, 252, 1311-1317;

Bagočius, D. (2020). The investigation of continuous underwater and impulsive impact piling noise in Lithuanian marine waters (Doctoral dissertation, Kaunas University of technology);

Lithuanian Environmental Protection Agency (2020). Report on Lithuanian marine area ecological state and environmental targets. (III parts, including underwater noise);

3.4. Report on noise management for cumulative impacts, including relevant regulations and guidelines, seismic shot point densities and level of impact deemed acceptable.

>>> Lithuanian Environmental Protection Agency (2020). Report on Lithuanian marine area ecological state and environmental targets. (III parts, including underwater noise);

3.5. Is the perceived level of pressure from underwater noise in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Staying the same

4. Ocean Energy

AIM: to understand the extent and development of current and planned ocean energy projects, and progress in monitoring and mitigation of their negative effects on small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.6, 8.3, 6.2

Renewable energy is a necessary component of the efforts to supply the energy needs of human populations while combatting climate change. Efforts to harness renewable energy sources, however, should be conducted in a way that does not have a harmful impact on biological diversity and the marine environment. There are potential adverse effects of ocean energy on small cetaceans from such energy projects. In regard to small cetaceans, this can include potential lethal interactions or injury, negative behavioural impacts from displacement and changes in fecundity, calf survival and juvenile and adult mortality. There remains uncertainty regarding quantifying the (magnitude of the) pressure from ocean energy production on small cetaceans.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed to introduce precautionary measures and procedures for activities surrounding the development of renewable energy in marine environments in order to minimise and mitigate possible effects on small cetaceans, by following best practices. Parties have committed to investigating such pressures and robustly monitoring and mitigating them through environmental impact assessments. Addressing all aspects relevant to the conservation of protected species in regard to ocean energy and collaboration with other organizations working on or potentially interested in the issue is to the benefit of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand current and ongoing renewable energy projects in the Agreement Area, mitigation measures and procedures in use and other work relevant to the topic. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities.

4.1. Were there any new wind energy farms in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue link button below.

Not Applicable. Comments:

>>> No data

4.2. Were there any new wave power installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

No

4.3. Were there any new tidal energy installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

No

4.4. Were there any new tidal lagoon/barrage installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

No

4.5. Has there been any other instances/issues related to ocean energy during the reporting period in your country?

No

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

>>> No data

4.7. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on ocean energy in your country.

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

>>> None

4.8. Mark the perceived level of pressure from ocean energy in your country in the table below.

For example, active construction of new developments could increase the pressure, while decommissioning or addition of mitigation measures to pre-existing projects could decrease the pressure.

	1. Status relative to previous years [Increasing, Decreasing, Staying the same, Unknown, Not Applicable]	2. Nature of the evidence
Tidal lagoon/barrage	NA	
Tidal energy	NA	
Wave power	NA	
Wind energy	Increasing	Planned wind park projects

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

8. Unexploded Ordnance

AIM: to provide information on the mitigation, management and potential negative impacts of unexploded ordnance on small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.8, 8.3

Unexploded chemical and conventional munitions present a threat to small cetaceans. Hazards exist from unexploded munitions, which release chronic contaminants, and upon detonation, which is physically hazardous from extreme underwater noise and a sudden release of toxic substances. Unexploded ordnance is a notable threat in many areas, such as the Baltic Sea, where the quantity is unknown, though estimates are high. Information on disposal, state of corrosion and quantities of dumped munition is limited, as are meaningful data on the measured environmental impacts. The significance of this pressure's impact on small cetaceans requires further quantification. However, it is clear that mitigation measures are necessary to support alternatives to detonations, and when no alternative is feasible, to reduce negative impacts on small cetaceans.

In the ASCOBANS Area, millions of tons of unexploded ordnance are present in the marine environment and thousands of sea users, such as fishermen, encounter such munitions every year. Parties have agreed on resolutions to support (1) research investigating the pressure on marine animals and habitat and (2) mitigation measures regarding effects of disintegrating submerged munitions on the marine environment. Parties are to strive towards providing relevant information to required bodies and supporting efforts to address the negative implications from this pressure in other regional and international organizations and waters.

8.1. To which registers/databases covering conventional and chemical munitions has your country contributed to date?

Respondents may select multiple options.

Unknown

8.2. How many UXOs were destroyed/released at sea?

Provide link to database record if available.

100+

8.3. Have there been any other instances/issues related to the issue of unexploded ordnance during the reporting period in your country?

No

8.4. How is the issue of unexploded ordnance being managed?

Include mitigation measures, relevant regulations/guidelines, year of implementation; may include planned management.

- >>> 1. Every year there is a planned area to be cleaned from UXOs.
- 2. Military is reacting to any call related to observed UXOs.

8.5. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on the issue of unexploded ordnance in your country.

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

>>> None in open sources in 2020.

8.6. Is the perceived level of pressure from unexploded ordnance in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or unknown?

Staying the same

D. Management of Cumulative Impacts

15. Marine Spatial Planning

AIM: to provide information on existing and proposed marine spatial plans and processes during the reporting period that may impact small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions 9.1, 8.9, 8.6, 8.3

A growing demand for use of maritime space increases pressure on ecosystems and marine resources. Marine ecosystems with good environmental status provide notable benefits to a number of economic outputs. Implementation of an integrated spatial planning and management approach can better mitigate negative impacts from maritime activities on marine environments. Spatial planning can support sustainable marine development through coordinated, coherent and transparent decision-making and the encouragement and identification of multi-purpose uses in relevant projects. Marine spatial planning is essential when selecting the most appropriate siting for marine-based projects. Particular attention should be given to critical habitat and relevant species, such as small cetaceans, in order to achieve good environmental status.

ASCOBANS Parties have agreed on a number of resolutions that support the integration of marine spatial planning into development processes. Small cetaceans benefit from good marine spatial planning and this is highlighted in the resolutions. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their country in this regard.

15.1. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen marine spatial planning.

National plan(s) and processes in force:

>>> Lithuania MSP was approved by the Lithuanian parliament in 2015 and the same year became part of The Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania is an integrated planning document with onshore and offshore space planning of the long-term strategy for the country.

National plan(s) and processes in preparation:

>>> In recent years, the new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania (including marine territories) was developed.

The concept (strategy) of the plan was approved by the Lithuanian parliament in 2020.

After approval of the concept, specified (detailed) solutions of the plan were prepared and introduced to all stakeholders and the public, and all of their proposals were considered. In the next stage, detailed solutions of the plan were agreed by all ministries. The new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania is in the final stage now - to become in action it has to be approved by the Lithuanian government.

The concept of the plan defines the strategy of Lithuania's country development until 2050. The specified solution stage encompasses development principles, rules, and priorities until 2030.

Further information regarding national plans, including links to online resources and maps where available:

>>> MSP part of Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania (now in action): https://map.tpdri.lt/tpdr-gis/index.jsp?action=tpdrPortal®_tpd_id=78440

Developed but not yet approved the new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania:

https://map.tpdri.lt/tpdris-gis/index.jsp?action=tpd_view&tpd_id=2240&doc_id=182605

Summary on the new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania (EN):

<http://www.bendrasisplanas.lt/2019/12/13/en/>

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of The new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania (EN):

<http://www.bendrasisplanas.lt/2019/10/02/strategic-environmental-assessment-sea/>

All the information regarding the development of The new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of Lithuania (LT): <http://www.bendrasisplanas.lt>

European MSP Platform: <https://www.msp-platform.eu/countries/lithuania>

Transboundary plan(s) and processes in force:

>>> <https://harmonylink.eu/lt/home/>

Poland and Lithuania are jointly implementing the investment project Harmony Link, which aims to create a new electricity connection between these countries. It will be a submarine cable line built using high voltage direct current (HVDC) technology. The project investors are electricity transmission system operators from Poland (Polskie Sieci Elektroenergetyczne SA) and Lithuania (Litgrid).

This project is of strategic importance to the European Union and to the energy security of the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. Harmony Link will increase the security of energy supply to consumers across the region and give market participants more opportunities to trade electricity in Europe. The new connection will be one of the synchronization elements of the Baltic energy systems and the continental European system.

<https://www.railbaltica.org/about-rail-baltica/>

Rail Baltica is a greenfield rail transport infrastructure project with a goal to integrate the Baltic States in the European rail network. The project includes five European Union countries – Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and indirectly also Finland. It will connect Helsinki, Tallinn, Pärnu, Riga, Panevežys, Kaunas, Vilnius, Warsaw. The Baltic part of the Rail Baltica project is referred to as the Rail Baltica Global Project.

Transboundary plan(s) and processes in preparation:

>>> No information available

Further information regarding transboundary plans, including links to online resources and maps where available:

>>> No information available

15.2. Have there been any other instances/issues in your country regarding marine spatial planning during the reporting period.

No

15.3. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on marine spatial planning 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.

>>> Depellegrin D., Menegon S., Gusatu L., Roy S., Misiunė I., 2020. Assessing marine ecosystem services richness and exposure to anthropogenic threats in small sea areas: A case study for the Lithuanian sea space. In Ecological Indicators, vol. 108. Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolind.2019.105730>

