

Agenda Item 2

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

Document NR.3

2021 Annual National Report: Lithuania

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Lithuania





ASCOBANS

2021 ASCOBANS National Report

The deadline for the submission of National Reports is **31 March 2022**.

As outlined in ASCOBANS Resolution 8.1 (Rev.MOP9) National Reporting, this form will cover the year 2021 (Year 2 of the cycle), and the following topics included in the Annex to the Resolution, in addition to the standard Sections I (General Information) and VII (Other Matters):

Bycatch (Section II A1)

Resource Depletion (Section II A2)

Marine Debris (Section II C9)

Surveys and Research (Section III A: Biological Information, B: Monitoring Programmes, C: Other Research)

Use of Strandings Records (Section IV A: Stranding Network and Strandings)

The National Reports submitted will inform discussions at the 27th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee in late 2022.

- All questions apply to the reporting period of 1 January - 31 December 2021.

- 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 2021 (Year 2), 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 Sea 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 harbour porpoise.

Obtain harbour porpoise detection data conducting the Environmental Impact Assessment Programme in the planned wind farm territory.

Obtain data on underwater noise in Lithuanian Baltic sea territory by the Environment Protection Agency.

I. General Information

A. Country Information

Name of Party / Non-Party Range State:

>>> Lithuania

Details of the Report Compiler

Name:

>>> Ieva Čaraitė

Function:

>>> Chief Desk Officer

Organization:

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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: IIA - 1. Bycatch:

Jolanta Cesiulienė, Chief Desk Officer, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, +370 5 239 8413, jolanta.cesiuliene@zum.lt;

Giedrius Mačernis, Head of the Baltic Sea Fisheries Control Unit, Fishery service Under the ministry of agriculture of Lithuanian Republic, +370 7 001 4931, giedrius.macernis@zuv.lt.

Topic contributed: IIA - 2. Resource Depletion:

Tomas Zolubas, Junior researcher, Laboratory for Fisheries and Aquaculture, +370 656 44714, tomas.zolubas@ku.lt;

Jolanta Cesiulienė, Chief Desk Officer, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, +370 5 239 8413, jolanta.cesiuliene@zum.lt.

Topic contributed: IIC - 9. Marine Debris:

Egidija Dūdaitė, Chief Desk Officer, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, +370 6 206 8704, egidija.dudaite@am.lt;

Arūnas Balčiūnas, Researcher, Marine Research Institute, + 370 4 639 8736, arunas.balciunas@ku.lt.

Topic contributed: IVA. Use of Strandings Records:

Žilvinas Kleiva, Chief Veterinarian and Deputy Director, Lithuanian Sea Museum, +370 6 715 5587, z.kleiva@muziejus.lt.

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:

Linus 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)

A. Fisheries-related Threats

1. Bycatch

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 9.2, 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.8, 5.7, 5.5, 3.3

Bycatch, the entanglement of an animal in fishing gear, is identified as a major cause of mortality in small cetaceans. Every effort should be made to reduce bycatch towards zero as quickly as possible. Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance of mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area, as available data indicates that levels of bycatch pose a considerable threat to their conservation status. Parties have agreed that modifications of fishing gear and relevant practices shall be applied in order to reduce negative impacts where data indicates unacceptable interaction. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas. To better understand the extent of the impact of bycatch on small cetaceans, monitoring and mitigation measures in place, and ongoing work in the Agreement Area, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: This section includes bycatch in recreational fisheries.

1.1. How is bycatch assessed/monitored in your country?

For the reporting period, please identify whether the following methods were used and the percentage (by monitoring method, of total bycaught animals, by gear type if applicable):

Dedicated observer schemes

Fisheries observes

Remote Electronic Monitoring

Self-reporting by fishermen

Pathological investigation

Assessment at stranding site

>>> Self-reporting by fishermen

Comments:

>>> All bycaught animals must be recorded in fishing logbooks

1.2. Which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch by commercial fishing in the reporting period?

Please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

Hold 'Ctrl' to select multiple options.

Not Applicable

1.3. Which species of small cetaceans were recorded as bycatch by recreational fishing in the reporting period?

Please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below

Hold 'Ctrl' to select multiple options.

Not Applicable

1.4. Has there been any notable incidents/issues related to bycatch during the reporting period in your country?

No

1.5. Are there are mitigation measures in place?

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

Yes

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

[Sec-II_A_1.5_0_\(1\).xlsx](#)

1.6. Have there been changes in fishing effort (for fisheries known to have an impact) in the reporting period?

No

1.7. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on bycatch 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.

>>> At regional level: Baltic Sea Member States (BALTFISH) submitted to the Commission two joint recommendations for reducing incidental catches of harbour porpoises in some areas of the Baltic Sea, following which the Commission adopted Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/303. Work also continues in the Helcom working groups

1.8. Is the perceived level of pressure from bycatch in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Staying the same

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable.

>>> Relatively stable herring and sprat quota's and pelagic trawls fishing effort.

2. Resource Depletion

AIM: to determine areas where, and to what extent, depletion of fish stocks have occurred during the reporting period. In addition; identify ongoing mitigation efforts regarding detrimental implications for small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.9, 8.3, 7.1, 6.1

Depletion in fish stocks due to overfishing and other factors generates pressure on the favourable conservation status of small cetaceans (through possible food shortage). More integrated management and reductions in fishing effort (also prompted by concern about fish stock depletion or other ecosystem considerations) have been encouraged, especially in areas of known risk. Further research, effective fishery regulations and innovation within certain fishing methods are considered to be helpful steps towards mitigating this pressure.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that (1) determine the impact of the depletion of fish stocks on small cetaceans, (2) encourage fishing effort reductions and (3) review new information on these depletions to make recommendations. Resource depletion in the Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand the extent of prey depletions, any related ongoing work, monitoring and mitigation measures in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide relevant information.

2.1. Based on the latest stock assessments, are there any notable depletions of fish species which would be a concern for small cetaceans?

Yes

2.2. Where are these depletions in national water occurring?

Please choose the sub-Regions from Annex A as defined by OSPAR & HELCOM.

Hold 'Ctrl' to select multiple options.

- OI Norwegian Sea
- H Eastern Gotland Basin
- H Gdansk Basin

Please choose the sub-Areas from Annex A as defined by ICES.

Hold 'Ctrl' to select multiple options.

- 27.3.d.26 - Southern Central Baltic - East

2.3. What measures are being taken to manage pressures on depleted fish stocks, including relevant regulations/guidelines (current/planned/year of implementation)?

Per measure, please provide timeframe information and relevant driver.

>>> All stocks in the Baltic Sea are regulated on the basis of ICES advice on fishing opportunities.

2.4. Is there any evidence within your country's national waters that resource depletion may be impacting small cetaceans (e.g. evidence of starvation)?

No

2.5. Are there any national efforts to evaluate cetacean body condition at sea (e.g. surveys)?

No

2.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on resource depletion 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.

>>> Lithuania is the member of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). The most important research relevant to Lithuania on stock depletion and state is provided in the scientific report: ICES. 2021. Baltic Fisheries Assessment Working Group (WGBFAS). ICES Scientific Reports. 3:53. 717 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.8187>

Survey of fish community in the coastal waters of the Baltic sea in 2021 and assessment of the ecological status based on fish indicators.

Conducted by State Institute Centre of Nature Research.

2.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from resource depletion in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Decreasing

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

>>> The most important stocks in the Baltic Sea for Lithuania are: Eastern cod, Central Baltic herring, Baltic sprat. The fishery targeting Eastern cod (fishing fleet operating with bottom trawls) is prohibited with some exemptions from 2020 until 2022, because bad state of the stock. Baltic sprat and Central Baltic herring stocks relatively stable but fishery targeting these stocks (fishing fleet operating with pelagic trawls) was shifted to the northern part of the Baltic (because bigger concentration of biomass) where the bycatch of harbour porpoise probability is very low.

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.

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

9. Marine Debris (ingestion and entanglement)

AIM: to illustrate progress, during the reporting period, on understanding, monitoring and mitigating impacts of marine debris on small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.8, 8.3, 6.1

Marine debris, such as macroplastics and discarded fishing gear, poses a threat to small cetaceans due to the potential for these materials to be ingested or to cause entanglement. Commercial fishing operations, recreational fishing and cargo shipping are notable sources of this material, of which the majority is plastic and ghost nets. However, it is assumed that most of the marine litter worldwide comes from land, although this differs per region. Even small amounts of macroplastics that have been ingested may present serious effects on small cetaceans, such as detrimental influence on the gastrointestinal tract or leaching pollutants into the body, potentially leading to mortality or reduced body condition. Entanglement is well-established as a threat to small cetaceans as plastic debris continues to accumulate in aquatic environments, and may cause physical injuries, reduced survival or drowning.

To better understand the impact of marine debris on small cetaceans and measures in place to mitigate these effects, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: Includes macroplastics and discarded fishing gear. Microplastics are covered under Section C 10 Pollution and Hazardous Substances.

9.1. Does your country have monitoring in place to assess levels of marine debris?

Yes. Please provide information below.

Include parameters provided through monitoring (e.g. type of litter (size, shape, material), amount, impacts on species, geographical location, etc.).

>>> Macro-debris monitoring is carried out on beaches and on the seabed.

9.2. Are these data publicly available?

Please provide web link.

Yes

9.3. What species of small cetaceans were found to have been impacted by marine debris?

Please provide details in the table.

Please provide details in **this table** - download and then attach it using the blue 'link' button below.

>>> NA

9.4. Are there any mitigation measures in place?

Mitigation measures might include changes in gear to prevent loss, entanglement response, adoption of measures to reduce land-based/boat-based sources of marine debris, etc.

Yes. Please provide information below.

Per measure, please provide: date of implementation, Region (Annex A), identify whether the measure has been effective and provide comments, and other relevant information.

>>> Dissemination of information on the damage caused by marine debris and appropriate behaviour in the marine environment.

Promoting environmental education campaigns, conducting research and filling existing knowledge gaps, especially with regard to micro-waste.

It is proposed that the use of single-use plastics should be kept to a minimum at major events on the sea shores.

It is proposed that litter containers adapted to the marine environment be used.

9.5. How is marine debris managed?

Include relevant regulations/guidelines and the year of implementation, current and planned.

>>> Abatement measures shall be periodically reviewed and updated. There is also a value for beach litter that defines good environmental status.

9.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on marine debris 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 (e.g. link to OSPAR reports).

>>> The Marine Research Institute of Klaipėda University is actively investigating the problem, therefore there is a focus group on this topic. The Institute currently has two national projects:

1. "Renewal of the Program of Measures and Measures to Achieve a Good State of the Baltic Sea Environment in Lithuania" No. 80JB-KV-18-1-04476-PR001, which provides for the activities financed under the initiative "Knowledge of the Development of the Sea" of the Sixth Union Priority "Promotion of Integrated Maritime Implementation" of the Operational Program of the Lithuanian Fisheries Sector for 2014-2020. Service contract "Determination of the performance of the survey of litter in the marine environment, determination of the quantities, nature, source and other characteristics of the litter"

2. "Marine litter monitoring" No. LT05-1-AM-TF-004, funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Program 2014-2021 "Environment, Energy and Climate Change". Service contract for the preparation of guidelines for the preparation of guidelines for marine litter and one international project Estimation, monitoring and reduction of plastic pollutants in the Latvian-Lithuanian coastal area via innovative tools and awareness raising (ESMIC) / Assessment, monitoring and reduction of plastic pollution in Latvia - Applying innovative measures and awareness raising at the Lithuanian seaside.

9.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from marine debris in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or unknown?

Staying the same

Please provide the nature of the evidence and describe per species (Annex B) where applicable:

>>> State monitoring of the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon.

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.tpdr.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.tpdris.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.bendrasiplanas.lt/2019/12/13/en/>

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

<http://www.bendrasiplanas.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.bendrasiplanas.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>

III. Surveys and Research

A. Biological Information (per species)

1. Abundance Estimates

AIM: to provide new information on abundance and life history parameters of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7, 5.5, 4.7, 3.5, 3.3

Abundance estimates and information on life history are of critical importance for the determination of broader species attributes such as populations levels, health and overall status. These parameters can contribute towards determination of GES and provide a reference for mortality events. Abundance and life history parameters are typically assessed from monitoring programmes. Fluctuations in these parameters can provide insight into trends in populations. Information on abundance and life history parameters can inform the need for mitigation measures, and regional assessment of these parameters allows for a more spatially targeted and concentrated response to support national assessments.

In the ASCOBANS Area, small cetacean abundance and life history should be monitored in response to a number of ASCOBANS resolutions. Continued monitoring of these parameters is essential to understanding current status and trends.

1.1. Did your country conduct national dedicated surveys on abundance and distribution 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. Attach maps separately, clearly marking which survey they apply to.

Note: Information relevant to SCANS-III is to be provided in Questions 1.2.

No

1.2. Other relevant new research/work/collaboration on abundance estimates in regard to small cetaceans in your country during the reporting period.

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

>>> The Environmental Impact Assessment Programme for the Installation and Operation of the Offshore Wind Farm of up to 700 MW Installed Capacity in Lithuania's Marine Territory was signed in September of 2021.

Organiser (Developer) of the proposed economic activity: Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Lithuania.

Developer of the Environmental Impact Assessment Programme: Public Institution Coastal Research and Planning Institute.

To assess the impact of a wind farm on sea mammals will be conducted an assessment for small cetaceans in the survey area.

1.3. Is the abundance of species in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same, or unknown?

Unknown

2. New Information on Life History Parameters

2.1. Is there new information on the following life history parameters in the reporting period?

For each life history parameters, please identify the species and provide web links and details where applicable.

	1. Yes / No	2. Describe per species
Other relevant factors	No	
Age and sex structure	No	
Diet	No	
Longevity	No	
Potential reproductive span/capacity	No	
Calf and adult mortality rates	No	

Inter-birth intervals	No	
Age of sexual and physical maturity	No	

B. Monitoring Programmes

3. Overview of Current Monitoring and Survey Schemes

AIM: to provide information on the progress of monitoring programmes, relevant methodologies and aims thereof, and status of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.8, 8.5 (Rev.MOP9), 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7
Monitoring programmes provide important data on biological and environmental attributes, such as population status, abundance and spatial-temporal distribution. They create opportunities for new research and development, including potential improvements to methodology for monitoring in terms of accuracy, practicality and cost efficiency.

In the ASCOBANS Area, application of coherent monitoring programmes focused on small cetaceans, which collect and provide objective, robust and comparable data, is a key component in understanding and improving the conservation status of small cetaceans through appropriate management. Parties have agreed to design, implement and support relevant monitoring programmes through a number of resolutions. Such efforts are also supported by legislation from a number of bodies which identify monitoring as a requirement in management systems. Additionally, Parties have been encouraged to coordinate their monitoring programmes, which promotes international cooperation and synergies. Parties have also been encouraged to review such monitoring programmes and propose improvements for the betterment of conservation efforts.

It is the interest of ASCOBANS to understand the current monitoring programmes utilised, their outputs, and future activities in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities as well as potential improvements to such programmes and efforts.

3.1. Did your country have national monitoring programmes that enabled assessment of the Conservation Status of small cetaceans in your waters (i.e. provides abundance estimates and/or life history parameters and information on pressures) 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

3.2. Please provide the relevant information regarding aerial surveying activities.

Provide the number of surveys, area covered, relevant species, and timeframe of the survey.

>>> NA

3.3. Please provide the relevant information regarding Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM).

Provide the location of moored instruments, timeframe of the survey, the relevant species, and the make and model of instruments used.

>>> NA

3.4. Are any of these programmes carried out in collaboration with other countries?

No

Please provide the collaborators and links per programme.

>>> NA

3.5. Please provide details on any planned activities relevant to monitoring programmes.

Provide web links if available.

>>> NA

3.6. Relevant outputs/findings from monitoring programmes to note.

Per species, please identify the relevant outputs.

Provide web links if available.

>>> NA

C. Other Research (not mentioned elsewhere in Section II, III, or IV)

Please provide relevant information in regard to other research (not mentioned elsewhere in Sections II, III, IV).

Per project, please provide the institution, duration, aim(s)/objective(s), and the method.

>>> NA

IV. Use of Strandings Records

A. Stranding Network and Strandings

AIM: to provide information on stranding events and demonstrate progress of stranding networks in understanding, monitoring and mitigating strandings of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: **8.10 (Rev.MOP9)**, 8.7, 8.4 (Rev.MOP9), 8.3, 7.4, 7.3, 7.1, 6.1, 5.7

Stranding of cetaceans is an ever-present occurrence and analysis through necropsy and sampling can provide indications of reason for injury and death. Stranding numbers also provide information on population status, abundance and distribution. Effective response to strandings contributes to the maintenance of favourable conservation status of small cetaceans and also has implications for animal welfare. Comprehensive stranding networks are a critical asset in managing small cetacean strandings and have resulted in large numbers of animals rescued and returned to sea. These networks also have the capacity to guide the public on animal welfare, human health and safety considerations during stranding events.

In the effort to mitigate the anthropogenic causes of these occurrences, Parties have agreed to measures through a number of resolutions. Continued monitoring of stranding causation and further developing guidance for best practices in stranding response and necropsies was identified by Parties as important tasks to pursue, as was setting up stranding response networks. This information is to align with appropriate sampling practices and countries should ensure that the data is available for researchers. Additionally, development and support of international strandings databases and regular reporting is conducted through relevant research institutes and stranding schemes. ASCOBANS Secretariat encourages the ongoing funding and support of engagement with organizations for further development of guidelines, best practices and maintaining dataflow for capacity building across stranding networks. To better understand the extent to which stranding events occur and how these events are managed, it is the interest of ASCOBANS for countries to provide the relevant information on these occurrences within the Agreement Area, procedures undertaken in response to stranding events, necropsies and information on stranding networks.

1.1. Is there a national stranding network in place?

No. Go to Question 1.4.

1.4. Is there a database of strandings?

No. Go to Question 1.6.

1.6. Provide details for any new institution(s) responsible for a stranding database, responding to live-strandings, collection of carcasses, and for conducting necropsies.

Please identify the new responsible institution(s) and provide their: responsibility (responding to live-strandings, collection of carcasses, necropsies, stranding database), phone number, email, and website.

>>> If there were any stranding events of cetaceans, the Lithuanian Sea Museum would be an authority for all above mentioned responsibilities (responding to live-strandings, collection of carcasses, necropsies, stranding database).

Lithuanian Sea Museum

Phone number:

Email: ljm@muziejus.lt

Website: <https://muziejus.lt/en>

1.7. Were cases photographed, measured or sampled even if not collected for necropsy during the reporting period?

No

Please provide details:

>>> No cases.

1.8. Were there recorded stranding events in your country 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. Provide details relevant for recorded stranding events during the reporting period.

No

1.9. Were any necropsies conducted during the reporting period?

No

1.10. Other relevant new research/work/collaboration on strandings and stranding networks 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.

>>> NA

