REPORT OF THE 15TH MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS JASTARNIA GROUP

Turku, Finland

18-20 March 2019

Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas

UNEP/CMS/ASCOBANS Secretariat, UN Campus, Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1, 53113 Bonn, Germany
Tel. +49 228 815 2416 - ascobans.secretariat@ascobans.org - www.ascobans.org

Table of Contents

REPORT OF THE 15th MEETING OF THE JASTARNIA GROUP

1. Opening of the meeting

1.1. Welcoming remarks

The Chair, Ida Carlén (Coalition Clean Baltic - CCB) invited Penina Blankett (Finland) to make an opening address.

Ms Blankett welcomed participants on behalf of the Finnish Ministry of Environment, noting that it had been ten years since the Jastarnia Group (JG) last met in Turku. She then called upon Vesa Taatila, the Principal of the Turku University of Applied Sciences, to address the meeting. Mr Taatila lamented the Baltic Sea's poor condition and stressed how important it was for Finland. He noted that there had been a significant decline in Baltic Harbour Porpoise numbers over the past decades and welcomed the fact that ASCOBANS encouraged cooperation in pursuit of finding solutions to international problems.

1.2. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair pointed out that the meeting would concentrate on those issues that were the focus of National Reports for the current reporting period. A further sub-item would be taken under agenda item 3, namely a presentation by a representative of the European Commission. The agenda as presented, subject to that one change, was adopted.

Late registrations had been received from two national advisers, the representative of the European Commission, and the representative of the North Sea Group (NSG). These additions were noted.

Jenny Renell (Secretariat) noted that the Sea Watch Foundation had been coordinating the North Sea, Jastarnia and Western Baltic, Belt Sea and Kattegat (WBBK) Plans in 2018, and for 2019 CCB had taken on the responsibility. Voluntary contributions to enable coordination to be funded this year had been received from Finland, Poland and Sweden, for which the Secretariat was very thankful.

2. Progress under the Jastarnia Plan (JP 2016) and the Western Baltic, Belt Sea and Kattegat Plan (WBBKP 2012)

Both progress reports were being revised in advance of next meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC). The deadline for receipt of documents for the AC was at least 35 days before the meeting[1] (i.e. early August 2019). The Chair asked that further updates and comments on the progress reports be submitted by 17 May.

[1] Rules of Procedure for the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee
https://www.ascobans.org/en/document/rules-procedures-advisory-committee-meetings

2.1. Overview report on progress under the Jastarnia Plan (JP2016) and the Western Baltic, Belt Sea and Kattegat Plan (WBBKP 2012)

Jastarnia Plan

Since the Sea Watch Foundation had produced the progress reports for Advisory Committee meeting in September 2018, and because CCB had taken on the Harbour Porpoise plans' coordination only in March 2019, Mr Evans briefed the meeting (on behalf of Sea Watch Foundation) based on those progress reports. A "traffic light system" had been adopted to indicate the progress made under for each action by each country. He pointed out that none of the boxes had been marked with 3, the score for "fully implemented". Finland, Germany and Poland were doing well on engagement. Some monitoring was being undertaken and there were plans for a follow-up to SAMBAH[2] project. Bycatch and noise were highlighted as major problems.

Signe Sveegaard (Denmark) asked how objective the ratings were. For example, she saw little point in Finland doing aerial surveys because of the low density of Harbour Porpoises in its waters. It would make more sense for Finland to carry out sound surveys. Olli Loisa (Finland) agreed that the score of 1 (small progress) was fair for his country. There were some sound stations operating but funding to continue had not been secured. Mr Evans agreed that the Eastern Baltic countries presented difficulties as there were so few recordings registered from Lithuania and Latvia and he regretted that neither country was represented at the meeting.

All countries scored 1 for bycatch. All countries scored 1 for work on noise with the exception of Denmark which scored 2 (steady progress). Ms Blankett said that noise from wind farms within protected areas was being addressed in Finland. Germany scored a 2 for monitoring and assessing the population's health status, while Denmark and the countries of the Eastern Baltic scored 0 (no progress).

Iwona Pawliczka (Poland) questioned the assessment "n/a" (not applicable), suggesting that "no data available" might be a more accurate description. Mr Evans suggested adding some notes to explain why the various scores had been awarded.

The Chair led an in-session exercise to define and write down requirements for each score. A few activity points were done at the meeting, and the Harbour Porpoise Coordinator i.e. CCB was tasked with finalizing this exercise. CCB would circulate the explanatory notes to JG members for comments.

WBBK

Mr Evans commented that implementation of the plan had improved through the appointment of a coordinator.

With regard to involving fishermen, Germany scored 2, while Denmark (1) had a system for having cameras on board ship, which was helpful for monitoring purposes but not for mitigation.

All countries scored 0 for cooperation. Ms Sveegaard asked whether there was a role for the Secretariat, but Mr Evans and the Chair thought the main onus should rest with the countries as it would be difficult for the Bonn-based Secretariat to take the lead other than with international fora. Julia Carlström (Sweden) felt that cooperation should entail liaising with other forums such as Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and with other national agencies and stakeholder groups.

[2] Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise.

All three countries achieved 1 for minimizing bycatch as there were some relevant fisheries regulations in coastal areas. Ms Sveegaard felt that Sweden and Denmark should have received 0 and more should be done to develop alternative gear and to distribute pingers.

Mr Evans said that there were several Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Natura 2000 sites in the Western Baltic. The next step was the development of accompanying management plans. Ms Sveegaard commented that little progress had been made in this regard.

Germany and Sweden scored 1 and Denmark 0 for replacing gillnets. Denmark had done some research, but this had not resulted in new measures being implemented. Mr Evans stated that enforcement was lacking. More gear was being replaced in Northern Sweden where seals rather than Harbour Porpoises were the issue. Patricia Brtnik (Germany) reported that the "*FLAG Ostseeküste*" ("lokale Aktionsgruppe Fischerei in der AktivRegion Ostseeküste e.V.") (an organisation of local fishermen) are conducting a project, testing and working with new gear in collaboration with the NGO, NABU[3].

Regarding bycatch monitoring, Ms Carlström said that Sweden and Denmark were conducting joint efforts under ICES[4]. Mr Evans justified the 0 rating for Sweden because it lacked a dedicated observer scheme at sea.

Despite SCANS[5] II, the Range States received a score of 1 and not 2 because of the long interval between SCANS II and III, although some smaller SCANS-compatible efforts were being made sub-regionally. New surveys should be done every 6 years and not every 11.

Ms Sveegaard questioned the validity of modelling as a stand-alone action, as the smaller area of the WBBK Plan did not lend itself to this approach. Mr Evans said that in the early days modelling was used to help address survey gaps in the North Sea. It was agreed that modelling be deleted.

Sweden was doing some research on exclusion and whether Harbour Porpoises return to area where pingers were deployed. In Germany, over 1.600 PALs (Porpoise Alerting Devices) have been deployed in the Baltic Sea. A workshop was held in November in order to discuss methods for a monitoring to investigate possible effects related to porpoise alerting devices (PALs).

No countries had a programme examining prey species in relation to Harbour Porpoises. In Germany, the Fisheries Ministry monitored herring stocks but not for Harbour Porpoise conservation. All countries received a 0 marking.

On habitat quality, all countries were working on the EU Marine Framework Strategy Directive (MFSD). Animals were known to be suffering from noise, and the MFSD required monitoring of noise from a range of sources including shipping traffic, seismic surveys and explosions. Ms Carlström suggested splitting monitoring from restoration efforts. Ms Sveegaard said that actions should be linked to relevant EU Regulations. In the North Sea, Germany and Denmark were doing parallel work but it was not coordinated fully, and it would be preferable for there to be common methodology.

2.2. National progress reports on activities since March 2018

Sweden

Ms Carlström reported that the sources for the Swedish report were the Swedish Museum of Natural History (SMNH) and the Swedish agency for Marine and Water Management, SwAM.

[3] Naturschutzbund Deutschland – Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union
[4] International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
[5] Small Cetaceans in the European Atlantic and North Sea project

Pingers not audible to seals were the subject of pilot projects and the voluntary use of pingers was being promoted in the Skagerrak and Kattegat.

SAMBAH II was being prepared, and a WWF-funded project was being conducted in a Baltic Natura 2000 site. The project would look at effects of underwater noise on porpoises and see if the use of pingers affected catch and losses to seals. A baseline study for shipping noise was being carried out on the Swedish west coast because of the rerouting of shipping lanes through two MPAs that included Harbour Porpoises.

The SMNH ran a recording scheme for Harbour Porpoises (both live and dead sightings) and 20 new specimens had been obtained. One sighting had been recorded in the outskirts of Stockholm.

Sweden had taken part in the Joint IMR[6]/NAMMCO[7] Harbour Porpoise Workshop (see item 3.7), and progress was being made on a national spatial planning framework.

Mr Ritter asked what the effects of the re-routing of the shipping lane on the Swedish west coast could be. The new route would be used in 2020 for first time and it went through an area important for Harbour Porpoises and had apparently through oversight been chosen with no regard for the species. The route would be monitored to ascertain the effects on Harbour Porpoises.

Ms Blankett asked if this was an issue that should be referred to the HELCOM maritime committee as it was not clear what the effect on the soundscape would be or how the Harbour Porpoises might react.

The JG expressed concern about the possible effect on Harbour Porpoises of this rerouting.

Finland

Mr Loisa said that reporting bycatch was now mandatory in Finland and that the first case of a bycaught Harbour Porpoise since 1999 had been recorded. The bycaught animal had been released alive and the boat owner had received a new Harbour Porpoise safe net. Biopsy samples had been sent for analysis.

Opportunistic sightings were being recorded and a database had been set up. All reported sightings were being verified. In course of the present century, 70 sightings of 120 animals had been reported.

Acoustic monitoring was being undertaken from the Åland Islands to the Archipelago Sea with 17 pods installed, 11 of them from the SAMBAH project. The pods were being serviced every four months. It could be confidently stated that Harbour Porpoises were present in Finnish waters, albeit in low densities. A monthly breakdown of acoustic detections and opportunistic sightings showed that there were more recordings in January and February and more sightings in the summer months when people spend more time at sea.

Twelve experts from the ASCOBANS area had submitted a letter about the status of the Harbour Porpoise on the Finnish Red List to the Finnish assessment group. The species was now considered an irregular visitor and listed as “not assessed”, having previously been categorized as “regionally extinct”, both of which the group of experts deemed incorrect. There was some debate about the Red List definitions in the Baltic. Ms Blankett said that the experts’ submission had been sent rather late, and that the new Red List was about to be published.

The Chair said that, in line with the approach taken by the IUCN, she would like the Baltic Harbour Porpoise population to be considered separately by Range States (see also item 3.4).

[6] Institution of Marine Research
[7] North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

Sweden was reviewing its Red List next year and the revision of Germany's Red List was also due. In neither country was the Baltic population currently treated separately.

Ms Sveegaard said that Denmark's most recent Red List dated from 2005 and later confirmed that it would be revised in the course of the year 2019. The Harbour Porpoise was currently categorized as 'Vulnerable'. Ms Pawliczka did not know when the next Polish revision was due. The Harbour Porpoise was currently categorized as 'Least Concern' but this was obviously a mistake. Ms Carlström said that ICES had three separate assessment units for the species in the North Sea.

It was concluded that JG recommend all Parties assess both the Baltic and the WBBK populations separately in their Red List processes.

Germany

Ms Brtnik reported that the German Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) had launched a new online distribution map of Harbour Porpoises, where the results of the monitoring can be accessed per season and year or for time frames of three years.

For the acoustic monitoring, sound-trap microphones ST300 HF with a 576 kHz sampling rate were being used and tested in an acoustic survey. The equipment had durability of 10 days, but newer systems are supposed to reach lifespans comparable with that of C-PODs.

The Stella project on minimizing conflicts with gillnet fisheries and testing alternative fishing gears was still ongoing. A workshop on porpoise alerting devices (PALs) had been held in November 2018 in order to elaborate methods for a monitoring to assess possible effects on Harbour Porpoises. A first aerial survey had been conducted in November. The *"FLAG Ostseeküste*" ("lokale Aktionsgruppe Fischerei in der AktivRegion Ostseeküste e.V."), an organisation of local fishers in Schleswig-Holstein, was working with the NGO NABU, on a pilot project with fish traps. A project on underwater noise conducted in conjunction with Denmark had been extended to May 2019. Strandings programmes operated in the Federal Länder of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Ms Brtnik also briefed that a report on trawling in MPAs had been published showing that 59 per cent were trawled, some more heavily fished than non-designated areas; and that a €0,45 stamp had been issued featuring the Harbour Porpoise.

Mr Ritter added that with regard to whale watching, a code of conduct had been prepared by WDC for use by the general public. It was available online[8] and a print version might be prepared. The appearance of occasional vagrant species tended to cause a flurry of publicity and it was important that people knew how to respond. The NGO community continued to collaborate after the experience of the "the Last 300" exhibition. A website aimed at children had won an award and the Stralsund Oceanographic Museum was going to have projections on its walls in the autumn.

Poland

Ms Pawliczka presented a report prepared by Monika Lesz of the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation. By law, bycaught specimens were to be landed but it was not clear what was supposed to happen next.

The Hel Marine Station's annual calendar for 2019 featured a Harbour Porpoise. Public awareness events included participation in the annual International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise and the House of Harbour Porpoise had opened in 2016.

On bycatch reduction, the University of Western Pomerania was conducting trials of cod traps and 100 pingers had been given to fishermen in Wolin National Park. The Sea Shepherd

[8] https://de.whales.org/wale-delfine/whale-watching/

Deutschland ship *Perkunas* had surveyed the Gulf of Gdansk and Puck Bay and had found no incidence of bycatch.

WWF had been running a project on ghost nets since 2009 but more information had to be passed on to fishermen about effects of such nets. A 'Farmer of the Year' award had been established to encourage practices to reduce eutrophication.

A three-year pilot project for monitoring marine species covered Harbour Porpoises in the Pomeranian Bay and in the Stilo Sandbank. The number of detection positive days (DPDs) was 4.56 and bycatch was recognized as a major threat, leading to the recommendations that C-PODs be deployed. Fifteen stranded Harbour Porpoises had been found in 2018 (compared with 11 in 2017) and one incident of bycatch had been reported. Stranded specimens were mostly too decomposed for scientific use and very few fresh bycaught specimens were delivered by fishermen, who were reluctant to admit to causing bycatch. Levels of cooperation were low as fishermen distrusted scientists, especially after Regulation 812/2004 was introduced.

Line Kyhn (Denmark) asked about the effects of climate change on prey and habitat. Climate change could help extend the Harbour Porpoise's range northwards in the Baltic.

Denmark

Ms Sveegaard started by noting that the changing roles within Denmark's administration meant that it was not clear who would be responsible for compiling National Reports in future.

Passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) had been conducted over the period 2011-2016 with five stations in five areas, of which only the Fehmarn Belt saw a reduction in Harbour Porpoise numbers. A mini-SCANS was planned for 2020 with aerial surveys by Denmark, Germany and Sweden. PAM in the Baltic proper around Bornholm had been started in June 2018 and would continue until June 2019. All of the pods had been lost, having been trawled up, and only four had been recovered in other countries.

The HELCOM group working on an indicator for abundance/distribution and health/ reproduction had been established with Germany and Sweden leading. The OSPAR marine mammal group had been re-established. NAMMCO had held a workshop on management units and assessment status.

On bycatch, the Ministry had a project to remove ghost nets. DTU Aqua was working on pingers and areas of conflict, in cooperation with HELCOM. A large pinger project was planned for 2019-2020 (involving Aarhus University, DTU Aqua and Fjord & Belt) and drones were going to be used to film mother Harbour Porpoises and their calves. Remote electronic monitoring using video surveillance gear was being deployed on seven boats within the WBBK Plan area.

Aarhus University was looking at the proposed changes to the shipping lanes. The effects of temporary threshold shift (TTS) were being examined and 20 carcasses had been made available for necropsy. Blubber thickness was being assessed to establish the animals' nutritional state. Harbour Porpoises were being fitted with GPS/acoustic/heart rate tags. The tags were attached by suckers and tended to stay in place for between two hours and two days. An animated graphic showed how a Harbour Porpoise responded to the approach of a ferry: it dove close to the bottom of the sea for safety and surfaced to breathe once the ferry had passed. From the graph it could be seen that the animal spent several minutes underwater trying to get away from the ferry.

A PhD student was investigating Harbour Porpoises' energy expenditure. At Middelfart, a listening station had been established which was contributing to outreach work.

Mr Ritter expressed doubts about temporary disturbance thresholds, the levels of which seemed to be arbitrarily set. The animals had to be observed to see how they responded. Ms Kyhn agreed.

2.3. Open discussion on progress

The Chair posed four questions: what was the top priority from each action, what could be done right now, who would be the main actor, and what could be done by the Harbour Porpoise coordinator.

Ms Carlström raised some questions about the general format of the Harbour Porpoise Action Plans' progress reports, noting that Parties already had to submit National Reports with the rotational topics to ASCOBANS. The progress reports for the Action Plans were an additional burden for staff with limited time. The two reports should be aligned more closely. The Chair remarked that the idea was that Parties reported to the JG which would in turn report to the AC.

Ms Renell said that the intersessional National Reporting Working Group had met in February to draft the questions for this year's reporting round. The working group was in the process of finalising the questions, which would be sent to Parties for a test run hopefully by end of April. Once the reporting form was finalised and circulated, Parties were likely to be asked to submit reports before August.

Mr Evans said that in the NSG the progress reports were independent of the ASCOBANS National Reports following a process established by the former coordinator, Geneviève Desportes. The strength of the progress reports was that they were an independent assessment. On taking over, Mr Evans had tried to arrange for all Parties to submit reports at same time for greater cross-comparability. He felt that the main burden arising from the progress reports rested with the Harbour Porpoise Coordinator rather than the National Coordinators (i.e. focal points) and other contacts. The National Coordinators were consulted so that they could review the composite report.

Mr Ritter said that the reports were useful, particularly because they were compiled by a quasi-independent third party. Ms Carlström stressed that it was important to distinguish between actions by Government agencies in a given country and what was being done by other entities.

In summarizing, it was agreed that the progress reports should be retained at least for now, and that they should be submitted to the AC. The Harbour Porpoise Coordinator would assess if the process could be made more effective.

Partial Review of the Actions and requirements for scores 0-3

Regarding Action 3 (Monitoring), Mr Evans asked whether deleting the reference to modelling was to apply to both the WBBK and the Baltic proper. SAMBAH had relied on modelling to complement the station records, and although ideally there should be full coverage, this was unlikely to be achieved with gaps in Russian and Estonian waters, where some sampling might be done.

Ms Sveegaard said that models had limitations and were inferior to proper monitoring coverage. She proposed that a recommendation be made to urge extending SAMBAH II to the waters of the Russian Federation and other Eastern Baltic countries.

The Chair said that the interval between surveys should be reduced, with score 3 reserved for periodicity of once every six years and score 2 for the status quo (i.e. surveys every ten years). She also highlighted a discrepancy between the range of the Baltic population of the Harbour Porpoise and the geographic scope of the Jastarnia Plan.

Ms Carlström stressed the importance of quality as well as quantity and the need to use the best technology available. She added a caveat that instruments and data would inevitably be lost. She suggested that the status quo equate to score 1, score 2 for the current frequency but greater geographic coverage and score 3 for more frequent and higher quality surveys, as for instance smaller-scale national surveys. The scoring applied to the individual countries' efforts rather than the areas covered by the Plans as a whole.

The Chair said that a 3 for national surveys would require results showing any changes in local population densities. Ms Sveegaard suggested adding the criterion of using SAMBAH C-PODs but added that population densities were so low in some places that detecting measurable change would be difficult. Ms Carlström suggested that sampling of sufficient quantity and quality should qualify, possibly using the key site concept under development by HELCOM. All-year monitoring should be undertaken in the Baltic proper.

Ms Blankett said that national budget processes ran on an annual cycle and therefore no medium- or long-term guarantees could be made regarding funding. The Chair therefore suggested removing financing from the criteria. Ms Sveegaard suggested introducing a scale relating to the frequency and intensity of monitoring, with surveys to take place two years in every six focusing on 50 per cent of key sites although setting a meaningful percentage would be difficult. The issue of the "not applicable" entries for some of the Baltic States would be solved if no key sites were identified there. Although not Parties to ASCOBANS, the Russian Federation, Estonia and Latvia had obligations under HELCOM.

Regarding Action 4, Mr Evans suggested splitting monitoring, estimating and reducing bycatch.

The Chair said there had been an estimate that in order to obtain a reliable estimate for bycatch, 80 per cent of the Polish fishing fleet would have to be monitored, which set a high standard for achieving a 3 marking. The criterion should require that a sufficient percentage of the fleet be covered to secure a robust estimate. There was discussion on what should merit a 2 marking, where the coverage would fall short of a level that provided robust estimates.

Ms Pawliczka said that monitoring was a problem in Poland, and official reports stated that there was little or no bycatch occurring. Most observers were monitoring fisheries activities and were not looking out for marine mammal bycatch.

Ms Carlström asked whether having a strandings scheme would merit a score of 2. This could be justified as strandings schemes were often more useful than other monitoring efforts.

The Chair said that good coverage of known problem areas and gear types and monitoring fisheries sufficient to detect marine mammal bycatch were required. It was agreed the Harbour Porpoise Plans' Coordinator develop definitions for the different marking levels across the actions.

3. Updates from across the Baltic and Belt Seas

3.1. Overview of HELCOM matters related to Harbour Porpoises

Laura Hoikkala (HELCOM) presented a video on HELCOM's second holistic assessment which covered the period 2011-16 and had been published in 2018.

She reported that the SEAL Expert Group had been renamed as EG MAMA to reflect the fact that it dealt with all Baltic Sea marine mammals. The indicator on Harbour Porpoise distribution and abundance was being split into two – one on abundance and trends in abundance, and one on distribution.

An indicator on bycatch was being developed by the HELCOM Expert Group on Fisheries Data (EG FISH), measuring the numbers of birds and mammals taken and effects on benthic biotopes. A Joint Workshop between HELCOM and OSPAR was planned on the bycatch

indicator, probably in September 2019, to develop methods to assess the pressure of incidental bycatch on birds and marine mammals. Focus would be on identification of cost-effective assessment- and data collection approaches. The HELCOM Secretariat was liaising with ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS on a potential joint session on cetaceans.

The HELCOM ACTION project running in 2019 and 2020 aimed to evaluate effectiveness of methods to achieve HELCOM goals, including the elements related to bycatch. High-risk maps would be developed for the south-western Baltic Sea, and for other areas there was a possibility to create high-risk maps based on available fishing effort data and Harbour Porpoise abundance data.

HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was being reviewed, recognizing the two sub-populations of the harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea.

The database was being updated, with reported sightings from Finland (2011-2016) added and the submission of Poland's data on strandings, bycatch and sightings (2005-2018).

3.2. Outcomes of the Second Marine Biogeographical Process Seminar and the EU Marine Expert Working Group Meeting

Second Marine Biogeographical Process Seminar, Palma

Ms Blankett reported from the Second Marine Biogeographical Process Seminar which took place in Palma, Mallorca on 13-15 November 2018. She explained that the aim was to identify key challenges and next actions for setting conservation objectives, favourable reference values and conservation measures, preferably at the regional level, which for many mobile species such as the harbour porpoise is the most relevant level, and to discuss how to break those down from the regional level to the national and site levels. For the Baltic species session, the Velvet Scoter and the Harbour Porpoise were used as case studies. Regarding the Harbour Porpoise, it was noted there is not enough information to set objectives, and that this was used by decision-makers to justify status quo. The other main challenges identified relating to setting conservation objectives were the mobility of species, the lack of money, climate change, political changes, adapting the way of communication with stakeholders, lack of precautionary approach, and how to set objectives on regional level and breaking down to national and site level.

Marine Expert Working Group, Brussels

This meeting, held from 28 February to 1 March 2019 in Brussels, had dealt with fisheries management measures in Natura 2000 sites, application of Articles 6.2 and 6.3 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) to fishing activities, the marine biogeographical process including a draft roadmap, financing marine Natura 2000 management in the period 2021-27, Prioritized Action Frameworks (PAFs) and the use of the European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF). The meeting was asked whether the Jastarnia Group could help with setting conservation objectives and favourable reference values for the Baltic Harbour Porpoise.

3.3. Report back from the ICES WGBYC Meeting

Mr Evans reported on the ICES WGBYC meeting held in Faro, Portugal on 5-8 March 2019. The terms of reference for the meeting covered national reports, bycatch mitigation (for birds and sharks as well as marine mammals), impacts on species, ICES coordination through the working group on marine mammals, research, and databases on bycatch monitoring and relevant fishing effort in European waters.

National reports had been received from Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden, but not Finland. Sweden's development of alternative fishing gear and

Denmark's use of pingers were discussed, and it was noted that the AquaMark 100 pinger was no longer available. Germany was using pinger detection amplifiers, but these were not working well, and Iceland even reported higher bycatch where they were deployed. Finn Larsen had done an analysis of the national reports. His conclusions were not positive, and he had made recommendations for future work.

A presentation on seabird bycatch in Poland for the period November 2014 to April 2015, which is a migration and overwintering time for birds, led to an extrapolation that a combined total of over 6,000 birds were killed in Szczecin Lagoon and Puck Bay during this period. This estimation compared with a reported loss of zero from observer schemes. A report from Hélène Peltier extrapolated bycatch levels inferred from strandings in the North Sea and the Channel. Nearly 900 stranded animals had signs of having been bycaught.

Mr Evans had mapped bycatch risk in relation to seabird and cetacean distributions in the north-western European seas, and produced graphics showing effort by country, gear type and month. Also significant was the time of day when fishing operations took place. Main risk areas to Harbour Porpoises with regards to being caught static gillnets seemed to be west of Norway and Denmark, south-western North Sea, eastern English Channel, and the Celtic Sea & south-west approaches.

Ms Pawlicza noted that the ICES report said that there was no bycatch in the Baltic based on eight days' observation effort in Poland and one day in Lithuania. She asked if it had been made clear that this level of observation was inadequate. With more emphasis on national implementation after the repeal of Regulation 812/2004, improvements might be achieved but it was unlikely that isolated national efforts would prove as effective as internationally coordinated measures, especially those aimed at rare species (such as the Baltic Harbour Porpoise). Improved monitoring, especially on smaller vessels, was one solution.

3.4. Proposal to list the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise population on CMS Appendix I

Mr Ritter said that at the previous meeting of the AC, two proposals had been mentioned for listing the Baltic Sea and Iberian populations of the Harbour Porpoise on Appendix I of CMS. Draft proposals were now ready. WDC had asked Germany to make the formal proposal to the EU. The German Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the Ministry of Environment had been receptive and supportive but needed to also refer the issue to the Fisheries Ministry where it stalled because of opposition to Germany taking the lead, despite the Fisheries Department's prominent role on whaling (IWC). Questions had been raised about whether the Baltic population could be considered discrete, despite Germany having funded related studies. WDC had then approached Sweden which was already considering putting a proposal forward but had doubts about whether there was time to meet the CMS COP13 deadlines. The Swedish Government had informed the ASCOBANS Secretariat explaining the current state of play and the tight timetable for completing EU consultations. Sweden had requested more time from the European Commission but was not granted any. Mr Ritter had spoken to the German Environment Ministry (Oliver Schall) and it appeared that there was some room to manoeuvre within the European Union's timetable. CMS procedures also did not require that a proposal emanated from a Range State.

Ms Brtnik suggested that the JG contact the Swedish Government (Susanne Viker) to ascertain what the deadlines within the EU were. Ms Blankett thought the enquiry would be better coming from the AC rather than the JG, given that the question was political rather than technical.

The JG also agreed that following the precautionary principle, Parties should treat the Baltic Sea population of the Harbour Porpoise separately as was done under the IUCN.

3.5. Emergency measures for the Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea

Mr Ritter reported that Seas at Risk, an umbrella organization representing several NGOs, including WDC, had responded to a call from the European Commission asking for briefings on possible emergency measures to be taken for species/populations where bycatch is considered a main threat. The NGOs' submission included information on threats to the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise population, as well as suggestions for measures. The brief was still in draft but would be signed and sent to the European Commission in due course.

Ms Pawliczka said that closing fisheries should not be an option where the fishermen were willing to cooperate. Mr Ritter agreed, saying that alternative gear should be developed, and fishermen should be offered other viable options if areas were closed to fishing.

3.6. SAMBAH II

Ms Carlström gave a presentation with an update on the status of the project proposal which would be submitted for funding under the EU LIFE Regulation. Planning meetings had been in Stockholm in December 2018 and in Turku in March 2019.

EU LIFE funding would be sought, and a lead organization would have to be identified. The next call under the LIFE programme would be made in April 2019, and concept notes would have to be submitted by June. A decision on what projects would be funded would be made in October and the full application would have to be submitted in January 2020, meaning the earliest feasible start date would be July 2020. The concept paper should extend to ten pages and the maximum variance in the proposed budget between the concept note and the proper application was 10 per cent.

The project aims were relevant to the Habitats Directive and MSFD on monitoring, reporting and bycatch. Priority goals were to achieve smaller confidence intervals for abundance, to produce monthly density maps and to assess the boundary between the Belt and Baltic populations better.

Mr Evans asked about coverage in the Eastern Baltic. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had been included last time under a subcontracting arrangement with Sweden, but it would not be possible this time. There were other funding sources such as the Baltic Sea Conservation Foundation, but this was geared more for conservation action than surveys.

3.7. IMR/NAMMCO Workshop on the status of the Harbour Porpoise in the North Atlantic

These reports were based on updates of the 1999 NAMMCO review, taking account of the IUCN 2008 assessment. Area "ambassadors" and topic experts provided information, identifying stocks and populations.

The Baltic Sea

Ms Carlström explained that the potential biological removal (PBR) was considered using the population estimate of 497 individuals arising from SAMBAH. Historic bycatch numbers were presented including old Polish records from the 1930s, a Swedish study in 1962 and Finnish data held by HELCOM dating from the 19th century. Results will be published in the IMR/NAMMCO workshop report in due course.

The Belt Sea

Ms Sveegaard noted that the first SCANS survey had been done in 1994 and smaller follow-up exercises had been conducted since. Bycatch data from the period 2008- 2016 were

available and after declining between 1995 and 2012, the Harbour Porpoise population was now stable and even increasing in the North Atlantic.

Mr Evans stressed the need for clarity over the exact position of the boundary between the North Sea and Belt Sea. Moving some of the North Sea population to the Belt Sea would have a greater effect on latter than the former. There was a similar issue between the Belt and Baltic Seas. He also commented that a great deal of data was available in forms that led to some duplication across the two Plans. This should be addressed for the next call for input to the progress reports.

The question arose of whether the two Plans needed to be revised. While the western extent of the Jastarnia Plan was clear, there was more doubt about the eastern edge of the WBBK Plan. It was also noted that the new Management Areas did not coincide with the areas identified in the Plans, a discrepancy that should also be addressed.

3.8. Status of the EU Technical Measures framework

Kenneth Patterson (DG MARE) said that Regulation 812/2004 would be repealed, and political agreement had been reached on the replacement technical measures. The new regulations would have more a regional nature and responsibility for implementation would be devolved to the Member States.

There were two key articles aiming to minimize the threats to vulnerable marine species and habitats. The targets were to be set in other legislation, and while there were none at present the MSFD was a likely future source. The monitoring requirement meant Member States had to do what was “necessary”. Advice would be provided by ICES and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). Member States were to work in groups with one of them submitting proposals.

The technical specification contained in Regulation 812/2004 concerning acoustic deterrent devices (ADD/pingers) had not been retained. The observer schemes required by Articles 4 and 5 were being replaced by provision for vessels over 15 metres, fishing gear and areas. Triennial rather than annual reporting would start in 2020. In a reversal of the burden of proof, evidence would be required for the conservation benefit of measures proposed.

Under the Data Collection Framework (DCF), annual reports on cetacean bycatch would be replaced by a database.

The definition of drift nets had changed and there was some discussion on whether swing nets were covered. Ms Pawlicza had doubts about whether semi-drift nets fell within the definition. It was agreed that the Secretariat write to ask the Commission’s opinion. Mr Patterson said that the Commission could explain its understanding but a formal, legal interpretation of the legislation would have to be tested in court.

Mr Ritter said that in his opinion the outcome of the review was the worst-case scenario for small cetaceans. Regulation 812 was ineffective, and what was being proposed appeared to be a significant step back. For example, regarding joint recommendations, Germany had been working with its neighbours and all proposals were watered down and finding common ground on even basics issues was proving difficult. The text on data collection was lacking detail. In summary, the work of the JG was being undermined.

The Chair asked what scope there was for infringement action if Member States’ proposals were watered down too far. Mr Patterson said that the triennial reports would show what was not working, and the first were due in 2022.

There were few specific targets in other EU legislation (e.g. the Habitats Directive referred to “strict protection” without defining what this meant in practice). Mr Evans said that ICES would

propose some more specific targets. The MSFD would possibly include more numeric targets, but the 1.7 per cent limit of total anthropogenic removal was thought to be unhelpful.

Ms Pawlicza asked about applicability to vessels under 15 metres. Mr Patterson said that in the new text due to be published in June the wording was neither explicitly inclusive nor exclusive. The general obligations applied across the board.

Mr Evans said that it was important that HELCOM as a forum of Member States should set targets regionally. Member States working alone would not be able to deliver. Ms Blankett said that this raised the question of which HELCOM Expert Group would be the most appropriate. The decisions would have to be referred to the HELCOM Heads of Delegation and this gave rise to questions of timing.

It was agreed that the Secretariat write a letter requesting that ASCOBANS be given a seat on the EU Regional Coordination Group for Baltic (and on RGC for North Sea & Eastern Arctic), but it was understood that the terms of reference made ASCOBANS participation difficult and that there were restrictions on the use of data.

4. Key Issues covered by national reporting in 2019 and their status in the Baltic

4.1. Pollution

Sinéad Murphy (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Galway, Ireland) gave a presentation remotely focussing mainly on Harbour Porpoises and Common Dolphins and the agricultural pesticide, DDT and PCBs (used as fire retardants in the building trade). The contaminants had been banned in the EU and under the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants they were being phased out leading to an outright ban.

Analysis of samples collected from stranded and bycaught female harbour porpoises sampled in all UK waters (i.e. the three MSFD Assessment Units) between 1990 and 2012 revealed that 19.7% of individuals showed direct evidence of reproductive failure (foetal death, aborting, dystocia or stillbirth), and a further 16.5% had infections of the reproductive tract or tumours of reproductive tract tissues that could contribute to reproductive failure.

ΣPCBs in blubber tissue was found to be a significant predictor of mature female reproductive status, with resting mature females (i.e. not pregnant nor lactating) more likely to have a higher PCB burden. The study suggested that at least 48% of resting females had not offloaded their pollutant burden via gestation and primarily lactation based on contaminant burdens. As these non-offloading females were previously gravid, suggests foetal or newborn mortality. Further, the pregnancy rate of porpoises in UK waters was much lower than other populations. As the study was retrospective, and the mechanism of action could not be determined the study could not conclude if the observed reproductive failure was directly as a result of exposure to PCBs - occurring through endocrine disrupting effects or via immunosuppression and increased disease risk.

A follow-up study on (stranded and bycaught) common dolphins in UK waters suggested that reproductive failure could have occurred in at least 30% of females. Although reported incidences of reproductive dysfunction are rare in cetaceans, 16.8% (18 out of 107) of common dolphins presented with reproductive system pathologies including conditions such as ovarian tumours, ovotestis, ovarian cyst, atrophic ovaries, vaginal calculi, and suspected precocious mammary gland development. Where pollutant data were available, all observed cases of reproductive tract pathologies were recorded in females with ΣPCB burdens >22.6 mg/kg ΣPCB lipid.

Q&A/Discussion

Denmark was analysing samples but there were no results available. However, a report might be made next year. Poland also took tissue samples and could test for contaminants where the specimens were not too decomposed, and it was important that carcasses of bycaught animals were made available and that an understanding of the life history parameters of the animals was obtained.

Mr Evans said that strandings programmes should follow standardized protocols for doing post mortems to ensure comparability and one obstacle was that countries had different levels of resources to undertake necropsies. Full examinations involving scrutiny of the ears etc. were costly. Bycaught carcasses provided clearer evidence of the cause of death. Ms Renell noted that a joint ACCOBAMS-ASCOBANS workshop on harmonising best practise guidelines for stranding events and necropsy methodologies was being planned for June this year.

Ms Blankett highlighted that there was an existing indicator on contaminants under HELCOM: lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd) and mercury (Hg) were measured in water, biota (fish and mussels) and sediments.[9,10]

It was agreed that as both the Jastarnia and WBBK Plans dealt with contaminants there was no need for a general Action Point, but that the treatment of bycaught specimens should cover standardized necropsy practices.

4.2. Physical habitat change

The Chair said that there was no presentation but instead suggested conducting a tour de table to ascertain what was being undertaken at national level. It was known that research was being conducted into noise.

Ms Sveegaard mentioned the BIAS[11] project. The Chair asked whether any research was investigating the effect of bottom trawling and diminished quality and quantity of prey species, but nothing was ongoing at present.

Mr Evans asked whether there were any construction projects regarding the building of bridges or tunnels. Some surveys were being carried out regarding the Fehmarn link, and the NGO NABU was mounting a challenge to stop the entire project.

Denmark was the only country yet to approve a major pipeline project, Nord Stream 2. Ms Sveegaard had been involved in the environmental impact assessment and it seemed that the project was unlikely to be disruptive unless munitions had to be destroyed.

Ms Carlström mentioned sand extraction: such operations could be disruptive, but much depended on the substrates and whether just the surface layer was removed or whether larger excavations were made.

4.3. Marine Protected Areas

Ms Brtnik made a presentation on the status of Germany's MPAs and the development of associated management plans. In the German Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), ordinances prohibited certain activities, such as recreational fishing and the dumping of dredging spoil.

For the management plans, inventories of features of conservation interest were made and deficiencies were identified. The causes of these deficiencies were sought, and measures were being devised to address them.

[9] http://www.helcom.fi/baltic-sea-trends/indicators/hexabromocyclododecane-(hbcdd)/
[10] http://www.helcom.fi/baltic-sea-trends/indicators/metals/
[11] Baltic Sea Information on the Acoustic Soundscape

Public consultations and inter-ministerial meetings needed to be held in each case, while the management of fisheries in Germany's EEZ needed additional agreement with neighbouring countries. Where no consensus could be reached, the European Commission could make proposals.

For the MPAs in the German EEZ, fishery regulations for gear that contacted the sea floor had been discussed in February 2019 within a national hearing and the international negotiation process was under preparation. Regulations for passive gears such as gillnets and entangling nets would be developed in a second step awaiting the outcome of the Stella project.

The Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein had eight Natura 2000 sites for Harbour Porpoises with management plans implemented and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania had twelve MPAs whereas for 7 areas the management plans were still under development.

Mr Ritter said that the NGO community had been disappointed that so few activities had been prohibited in marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), with windfarms, recreational fishing, shipping and military manoeuvres all permissible and no no-take zones established. WDC, NABU and WWF had provided expert opinions, but these had been mainly ignored. The initial proposals were weak and had been weakened further. The deal agreed for Baltic Sea fisheries meant that no action would be taken on gillnets until the results of the Stella project were known. The Government of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania had refused to change its stance on gillnets for some time. The European Commission had sent them a "blue letter", the first stage of an infractions procedure.

Ms Carlström made a presentation on management plans for Harbour Porpoise Natura 2000 sites in Swedish waters. She said that Sweden had twelve SACs for Harbour Porpoises but only four had management plans; these were the responsibility of the county-level administrations. The aim was to ensure that porpoises could exercise their natural behaviour, free from the danger of bycatch and other stresses. The aims were all rather vague and at times contradictory (pinger-use was mandatory but there was to be no disturbance from pingers). One of the SACs in south-east Swedish waters had no effective management plan. The Chair pointed out that some of the designated areas had their main part outside Swedish territorial waters, placing them mainly in the EEZ which meant that some type of regulations could not be imposed there.

Mr Ritter said that early proposals in Germany included mandatory use of pingers in SACs but NGOs had succeeded in having this provision removed on the grounds that pingers excluded animals from their habitat. There was uncertainty about how measures would be monitored and how such monitoring would be funded.

4.4. Whale watching and recreational sea use

Mr Ritter made a presentation showing that in Germany there was some land-based whale-watching conducted on the island of Sylt where Harbour Porpoises came close to shore in spring and summer often with calves. A Whale Path had been established on Sylt with 22 information stations. Boat trips were run from Flensburg and Eckernförde. There was information on the Sylt Whale Path (Sylter Walpfad) on line, as was the IWC Whale Watching Handbook. He gave a demonstration of the IWC handbook[12] which contained details of many whale watching operations worldwide.

WDC, the German Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the Society for the Protection Dolphins were working on whale watching guidelines as none were currently available. All operations in Germany were low level and opportunistic. The guidance was also aimed at the general public and other recreational water users such as canoeists.

[12] https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/

Denmark had a small number of operators focusing on Harbour Porpoises. There were no guidelines for operators to follow but it was thought that the small number of boats concerned were unlikely to be a major source of stress for the animals observed; stressed Harbour Porpoises tended to swim away.

Mr Evans had also done considerable work on producing guidance. He said that there were many operators in the UK. Other recreational vessels were likely to be a greater source of stress to Harbour Porpoises than whale-watching vessels.

Ms Carlström said that there was one operator in Southern Sweden who was considered conscientious. They conduct up to six trips per day at the peak of the season and would probably welcome guidance.

The Chair suggested that it would be beneficial if the new WDC guidance could be made available for translation.

5. Review of Action Points

The Chair ran through the Action Points arising from the previous meeting of the JG. Some points were retained unaltered, some amended or merged, and others deleted. A new Action Point was added concerning the separate treatment of the populations of Harbour Porpoises in the Belt Sea and the Baltic proper. There were longer discussions on ASCOBANS liaising with HELCOM over the revised Technical Measures Directive and arrangements for timing of JG meetings in relation to meetings of the AC and the HELCOM EG MAMA.

The revised list of Action Points appears as Annex 1 to this report. The list does not include items considered to be of an administrative nature which would be dealt with internally by the JG, the Secretariat or other stakeholders, such as writing to the European Commission for an opinion on the definition of driftnets. The “internal” action points are recorded in Annex 2.

6. Any other business

National Reporting Working Group

Ms Renell briefed the meeting of the results of the ASCOBANS Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting, which had met in February 2019 to develop questions and report format for year 2019. She described some of the aims of the key sections and sought feedback from participants. She stressed that the questionnaire was still in draft form and it was proposed to trial the questions in April. National Coordinators were reminded that they were encouraged to delegate questions to experts in the relevant fields according to each section.

The questions that were the focus for the forthcoming National Reporting round were: whale watching, recreational sea use, pollution and hazardous substances, ship strikes, physical habitat change, MPAs, climate change, and education and outreach.

After examining some of the sections in detail, it was agreed that the rest would be circulated through email for feedback.

EU Technical Measures

Mr Ritter reiterated his comments regarding his disappointment and concern at the outcome of the consultation on the Technical Measures Directive. ASCOBANS (and ICES WGBYC) had provided a great deal of input but little of its advice had been heeded.

Ms Brtnik, recalling that a specific workshop had been held to elaborate recommendations, suggested examining the draft text to see what advice provided by ASCOBANS had been incorporated. ASCOBANS had called for more targeted monitoring aimed at protected

species, more regionalization to focus effort on the most problematic fisheries and more direction from the European Commission as implementation by Member States was inadequate. Member States and the European Parliament had opted for greater devolution. ICES WGBYC had similar concerns.

The JG expressed its disappointment that the concerns of ASCOBANS and ICES had not been taken on board. Furthermore, the JG doubted that Member States would be able to provide true bycatch rates and therefore would not be held to account for failing to reach goals.

7. Date and venue of the 16th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group

There was some discussion about the desirability of combining JG meetings with either the HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA) or the NSG. This would mean fewer though longer meetings but would reduce the amount of time spent travelling. HELCOM EG MAMA usually met in the autumn, with two days dedicated to seals and one to Harbour Porpoises, and this could result in recommendations of the JG not being considered by the AC for nearly a year, unless an intersessional procedure were established for adoption by email. The agenda of back-to-back meetings would have to be coordinated to reduce duplication. It was reported that the NSG preferred to align its meetings with those of the AC. The possibility of holding meetings every two years was also raised.

There was a consensus to explore the possibility of aligning meetings of the JG with HELCOM MAMA in years when the AC met and with the NSG in MOP years. It was noted that if no Party offered to host HELCOM meetings, the default venue was Helsinki with rooms provided by the Finnish Ministry of Environment. The next ASCOBANS Meeting of Parties was scheduled to take place in the second half of 2020, so dates for the next meeting of the JG would have to be discussed with the NSG.

8. Close of Meeting

Following the customary expression of thanks to the hosts for providing the venue and for organizing the reception and all those that had contributed to the success of the meeting, the Chair declared proceedings closed.

Annex 1: Action Points adopted at JG15, Jastarnia and WBBK Plans

Reference	Action Point (old reference)	Jastarnia Plan		WBBK Plan	
		Applies	Mandate	Applies	Mandate
JG15/AP1	Parties shall establish or further improve local and national monitoring programmes for Harbour Porpoise occurrence and to further ensure these are aligned in terms of timing and methodology between countries, in order to complement large-scale international monitoring activities. **(JG14/AP1)**	X	**MON-01:** Implement and harmonize long-term continual acoustic Harbour Porpoise monitoring	X	**Objective d:** Monitoring the status of the population
JG15/AP2	Parties are strongly encouraged to support SAMBAH-II, specifically in terms of fundraising, in order for a project proposal to be submitted in 2019 and for the project to start in 2020. Noting that management authorities are required to be formal partners for the SAMBAH-II Life application. **(JG14/AP2)**	X			
JG15/AP3	Parties are strongly encouraged to continue to undertake and cooperate on inter-SCANS surveys of the WBBK Harbour Porpoise population and evaluate trends in population density and abundance. **(JG14/AP3/WBBK)**			X	**Rec.7:** Estimate trends in abundance of Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat
JG15/AP4	Parties are strongly encouraged to use the data provided by SAMBAH, in particular in connection with the establishment of MPAs for Harbour Porpoises, as well as with regard to management plans and mitigation measures. **(JG14/AP4)**	X	**MIT-06:** Expand the network of protected areas for Harbour Porpoises, improve its connectivity, and develop and implement appropriate management plans including monitoring schemes for these areas		
JG15/AP5	Parties should investigate possible detrimental effects of various types of sound and disturbance on Harbour Porpoises (including pinger signals, noise from vessels, seismic surveys, wind parks or construction). Parties should initiate and support studies on the effect of anthropogenic noise on the Harbour Porpoise both on the individual and on a population level. **(JG14/AP6)**	X	**RES-07:** Improve knowledge on impact of impulsive and continuous anthropogenic underwater noise on Harbour Porpoises, and development of threshold limits of significant disturbance and GES indicators	X	**Objective e:** Ensuring habitat quality favourable to the conservation of the Harbour Porpoise

Reference	Action Point (old reference)	Jastarnia Plan		WBBK Plan	
		Applies	Mandate	Applies	Mandate
JG15/AP6	Parties are encouraged to develop and adopt internationally harmonized national regulations on sound emissions associated with anthropogenic activities in the marine environment. Such regulations should set upper limits to sound emissions and be consistent with the relevant Indicators for Good Environmental Status to be developed for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. **(JG14/AP7)**	X	**MIT-05:** Implement regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise	X	
JG15/AP7	Parties should promote research on the consequences of impacts on prey communities for Harbour Porpoises. **(JG14/AP8)**			X	**Rec.10:** Include monitoring and management of important prey species in national Harbour Porpoise management plans
JG15/AP8	Parties are required to establish systems to effectively monitor bycatch covering all sizes of fishing vessels. **(JG14/AP9)**	X	**MON-03:** Monitor and estimate Harbour Porpoise bycatch rates and estimate total annual bycatch	X	**Rec.6:** Estimate total annual bycatch
JG15/AP9	Parties should consider the recommendations of the October 2015 ASCOBANS Workshop on Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) and implement this technique for bycatch monitoring as appropriate in the national context. **(JG14/AP10)**	X	**RES-03:** Improve methods for monitoring and estimation of Harbour Porpoise bycatch	X	
JG15/AP10	Parties are strongly encouraged to carry out spatio-temporal risk-assessments of Harbour Porpoise bycatch using Harbour Porpoise distribution and fishing effort data. **(JG14/AP12)**	X	**RES-04:** Carry out a spatio-temporal risk assessment of Harbour Porpoise bycatch	X	
JG15/AP11	Parties should endeavour to develop, in cooperation with stakeholders, fishing gear that does not cause Harbour Porpoise bycatch, and strive to replace gillnets with such alternative gear, especially in MPAs. **(JG14/AP16, JG14/AP13)**	X	**RES-05:** Further develop and improve fishing gear that is commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch **MIT-01:** Implement the use of fishing gear that is commercially viable with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch	X	**Objective b:** Mitigation of bycatch
JG15/AP12	Parties should promote the development of pingers not audible to seals and alerting	X	**RES-05:** Further develop and improve fishing gear that is commercially viable	X	

Reference	Action Point (old reference)	Jastarnia Plan		WBBK Plan	
		Applies	Mandate	Applies	Mandate
	devices other than pingers. **(JG14/AP14)**		with no Harbour Porpoise bycatch		
JG15/AP13	Parties should monitor the use and functioning of deterrent and alerting devices. **(JG14/AP15)**	X	**MIT-03:** Continue or implement the use of acoustic deterrent devices (pingers) and acoustic alerting devices proven to be successful when and where deemed appropriate	X	
JG15/AP14	With respect to recreational fisheries, Parties should work towards banning or limiting the use of those types of gear known to pose a threat to Harbour Porpoises. **(JG14/AP17)**	X	**MIT-02:** Reduce or eliminate fishing effort with gillnets or other gear known to cause porpoise bycatch in areas with higher Harbour Porpoise density or occurrence, and/or in areas with higher risk of Harbour Porpoise bycatch, according to spatio-temporal risk assessments	X	**Rec.3:** Protect Harbour Porpoises in their key habitats in minimizing bycatch as far as possible **Rec.5:** Where possible replace gillnet fisheries known to be associated with high porpoise bycatch with alternative fishing gear known to be less harmful
JG15/AP15	Parties are encouraged to coordinate and standardize monitoring of stranded and bycaught animals, determining the appropriate number of animals to be necropsied in each country, and ensuring that health, contaminant load, life-history parameters and cause of death is examined in a similar manner, and that tissue samples are collected for future needs. **(JG14/AP18, JG14/AP19)**	X	**MON-04:** Collect dead specimens and assess health status, contaminant levels, cause of mortality and life-history parameters of Harbour Porpoises	X	**Rec.8:** Monitor population health status, contaminant load and causes of mortality
JG15/AP16	All Parties and range states should establish programmes for recording, bycatch, strandings and opportunistic sightings for inclusion in a national database, and report annually to the ASCOBANS/HELCOM database. **(JG14/AP20)**	X	**PACB-01:** Improve communication and education for increased public awareness and collection of live observations and dead specimens of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise	X	**Objective d:** Monitoring the status of the population
JG15/AP17	The Jastarnia Group promotes further cooperation with HELCOM EG MAMA and will strive to cooperate with the HELCOM Fish Group. The Jastarnia Group	X	**COOP-02:** Strive for close cooperation between ASCOBANS and other international bodies	X	**Rec.2:** Cooperate with and inform other relevant bodies about the Conservation Plan

Reference	Action Point (old reference)	Jastarnia Plan		WBBK Plan	
		Applies	Mandate	Applies	Mandate
	should invite HELCOM to its meetings. **(JG14/AP22)**				
JG15/AP18	ASCOBANS should join efforts with HELCOM to liaise with the European Commission and other relevant bodies to influence the implementation by Member States of the EU Technical Measures Regulation and the Data Collection Framework to better incorporate and tackle bycatch concerns. **(JG14/AP23)**	X		X	
JG15/AP19	Coordinating Authorities of the countries hosting the Group's meetings are asked to ensure the attendance of an expert on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) at the respective meetings of the Group. The Secretariat should recall this recommendation to the Coordinating Authority of the host country in good time before the meeting. **(JG14/AP24)**	X	**Other**	X	**Other**
JG15/AP20	Parties should ensure that Belt Sea and Baltic Sea populations of harbour porpoises are assessed and managed as separate populations, e.g. in management plans and national redlists.	X	**Other**	X	**Other**

Annex 2: Internal Action Points from JG15

1. CCB would circulate the explanatory notes on requirements for scores on Harbour Porpoise action plans' implementation to JG members for comments.

2. It was agreed that the progress reports of the Harbour Porpoise action plans should be retained at least for now, and that they should be submitted to the AC. The Harbour Porpoise Coordinator would assess if the process could be made more effective.

3. It was agreed that the Secretariat write a letter requesting that ASCOBANS be given a seat on the EU Regional Coordination Group for Baltic (and on RGC for North Sea & Eastern Arctic), but it was understood that the terms of reference made ASCOBANS participation difficult and that there were restrictions on the use of data.

4. It was agreed that as both the Jastarnia and WBBK Plans dealt with contaminants there was no need for a general Action Point, but that the treatment of bycaught specimens should cover standardized necropsy practices.

5. The next ASCOBANS Meeting of Parties was scheduled to take place in the second half of 2020, so dates for the next meeting of the JG would need to be discussed with the NSG.

Annex 3: List of Participants

Penina **BLANKETT**
Ministry of the Environment
Aleksanterinkatu 7
00023 Helsinki
Finland
Tel.: +358 295250058
penina.blankett@ym.fi

Patricia **BRTNIK**
German Oceanographic Museum
Katharinenberg 14-20
18439 Stralsund
Germany
Tel.: +49 38 301 86 158
patricia.brtnik@meeresmuseum.de

Ida **CARLÉN**
Coalition Clean Baltic
Östra Ågatan 53
75322 Uppsala
Sweden
Tel.: +46 703133067
ida.carlen@ccb.se

Julia **CARLSTRÖM**
Department of Environmental
Research and Monitoring
Swedish Museum of Natural History
PO Box 50007
104 05 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel.: +46 8 5195 4190
julia.carlstrom@nrm.se

Peter **EVANS**
Bangor University,
School of Ocean Science /
Sea Watch Foundation
Ewyn y Don, bull Bay
Amlwch, Isle of Anglesey
Whales LL68 9SD
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 1407 832892
peter.evans@bangor.ac.uk

Anja **GALLUS**
German Oceanographic Museum
Katharinenberg 14-20
18439 Stralsund
Germany
Tel.: +49 38312650393
anja.gallus@meeresmuseum.de

Laura **HOIKKALA**
HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission)
Norkkokuja 9D 22
00790 Helsinki
Finland
Tel.: +358 46 850 9204
laura.hoikkala@helcom.fi

Line A. **KYHN**
Department of Bioscience
Aarhus University
Frederiksborgvej 399
4000 Roskilde
Denmark
Tel.: +45 30183148
lky@bios.au.dk

Jussi **LAAKSONLAITA**
Turku University of Applied Sciences
Lemminkäisenkatu 30
20520 Turku
Finland
Tel.: +358 403550925
jussi.laaksonlaita@turkuamk.fi

Olli **LOISA**
Turku University of Applied Sciences
Lemminkäisenkatu 30
20520 Turku
Finland
Tel.: +358 505985743
olli.loisa@turkuamk.fi

Kai **MATTSSON**
Meritime Consulting
Saarenmaantie
Finland
Tel.: +358 407654077
kai@meritime.net

Sinéad **MURPHY** *(participated via Skype)*
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
Dublin Road, Galway
H91 T 8NW
Ireland
Sinead.Murphy@gmit.ie

Kenneth **PATTERSON**
European Commission
J-9901/032
1049 Brussels
Belgium
Tel.: +32 2 229 98227
kenneth.patterson@ec.europa.eu

Iwona **PAWLICZKA**
Hel Marine Station University of Gdansk
Morska 2
84-150 Hel
Poland
Tel.: +48 586751316
iwona.pvp@ug.edu.pl

Jenny **RENELL**
ASCOBANS Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany
Tel.: +49 228 815 2418
jenny.renell@un.org

Fabian **RITTER**
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Bundesallee 123
D-12161 Berlin
Germany
Tel.: +49 30 85 07 82 74
fabian.ritter@whales.org

Patrick **SCHWARZBACH**
German Oceanographic Museum
Katharinenberg 14-20
18439 Stralsund
Germany
Tel.: +49 38312650395
patrick.schwarzbach@meeresmuseum.de

Signe **SVEEGAARD**
Aarhus University
Department of Bioscience
Frederiksborgvej 399
400 Rosskilde
Denmark
Tel.: +45 28951664
ssv@bios.au.dk

Marta **SZULFER**
Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation
Nowy Swiat 6/12 Street
00-400 Warsaw
Poland
Tel.: +48 22 583 8930
marta.szulfer@mgm.gov.pl

Robert **VAGG** *(Report Writer)*
CMS Secretariat
UN Campus
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn
Germany
Tel.: +49 228 815 2476
robert.vagg@cms.int