

Agenda Item 4

Annual Reports 2008

Document 64

Reports received from Poland
a) Annual National Report

Action Requested

- Briefly present highlights from reports (max. 5 minutes)
- Take note of the information submitted
- Comment

Submitted by

Poland



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

ASCOBANS Annual National Report - **DRAFT**

A. General information

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of party: Poland | Period covered: 1.01- 31.12.2008 |
| Name of report compiler Iwona Kuklik, Krzysztof E.Skóra | Date of report 15.04.2009 |
| Authority, appointed member of advisory committee Coordinating authority – Monika Lesz, Ministry of the Environment AC member – Krzysztof Skóra, Hel Marine Station, University of Gdańsk | |

B. NEW measures/action towards meeting the resolutions of the 2nd Meeting of Parties

1. Direct interaction of small cetaceans with fisheries

Investigations of methods to reduce by-catch

A 3-year pilot project: “Active protection of harbour porpoises against the by-catch” has been commenced in the Puck Bay. The project is financed by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management and the University of Gdańsk. The program is carried out by the Hel Marine Station. The project framework envisages that the effectiveness of pinger acoustic barrier will be determined at the entry to the Puck Bay. The method implies that an acoustic barrier will be applied and its effects investigated. The method is a temporary measure for the reduction of the mortality of harbour porpoises on fishing grounds in the Puck Bay and allows to preserve the traditional methods of small boats fishery.. At the initial phase of the project, that seasonal changes in the deployment of gill nets and the size of fishing quotas will be investigated along with the timing of the occurrence of harbour porpoises in the area. It is assumed that in the next years the subject of research will be the pinger barrier and its effectiveness in the hindering of harbour porpoises from entering fishing grounds which may be dangerous to them.

An integral part of the project is a broad action for the delivery to local fishermen and the public, of information, ideas and anticipated effects of research and protective actions. The purpose of the action is to receive reports on by-catches, observations and the findings of dead harbour porpoises on shores.

Implementation of methods to reduce by-catch

Actions for the reduction of by-catches, implemented in Poland, is based on Regulation 812/2004/EU. Since 1 January 2008, the drift nets use has been banned and that type of nets is no longer declared in fishing licences of Polish Baltic fishermen. The number of driftnets has been reduced in Polish fishery on a phased basis: in the first year – by almost 18%, in the second year – by 24% and in the third year directly preceding the imposition of the ban – by further 2%. The use of set gill nets (GNS) has achieved the level of 71% of 2004 and such level has prevailed for the last two years.

Table

The rate of reduction of the number of gill nets – GND and GNS types – declared to be owned by Polish fishermen in years 2004-2008 (2004 year as a 100%). Data based on the registers held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Development of Rural Areas for 2004 – 2008)

| Year | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| GND | 100% | 82% | 76% | 74% | - |
| GNS | 100% | 79% | 77% | 74% | 71% |

And further, the Fishery Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Development of Rural Areas purchased 500 pingers and delivered them to fishermen so that the pingers are applied on fishing grounds of ICES 24. It's estimated that when all these devices are delivered to local fishermen, the pingers purchased will cover only the one fifth of the whole demand for pingers needed by gill set nets (GNS) which may be used by local fishery.

Estimates of by-catch in set net and pelagic trawl fisheries

Year 2008 was another year following the implementation of Regulation 812/2004/EU, when no reports on by-catches were delivered on a voluntary basis, which may indicate that the population of animals dropped or that fishermen are not willing to deliver such reports.

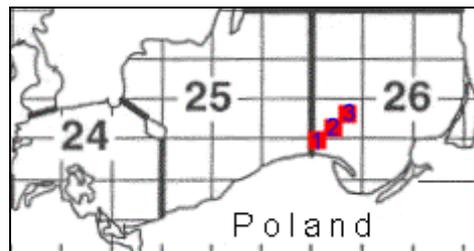
| Species | Estimated number of by-caught animals | Area (ICES area or more detailed) | Notes (type of fishery, effort, seasonal variations, etc.) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> | 0 | - | In 2008, the – so called – “Observers Programme” – for the monitoring of by-catches of whales was not carried out. |

2. Reduction of disturbance to small cetaceans

Information on levels of disturbance

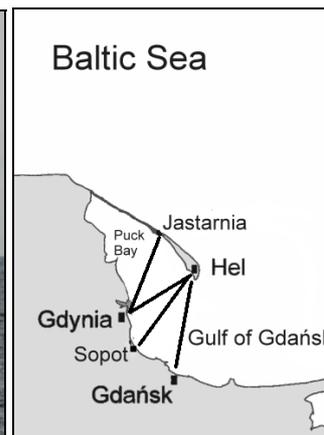
(e.g. seismic surveys, new high-speed ferry routes, studies about acoustic impacts on cetaceans, etc.)

According to information obtained from the Department of Geology and Geologic Licences and Concessions of the Ministry of Environment, geologic investigations using acoustic seismic methods were carried out in December 2008 in the area of basins situated in the 26 ICES square. Field investigation of natural gas and oil beds were carried out a by CGG Veritas being a French company. For the purpose of investigation three ships were used, namely Ventur, Maggie M and Ramco Energy.



| Nº | Licence / Object | Type of works | Size |
|----|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Nº 34/2001/p „Gaz Południe”, B22 | 2D | 205 km ² |
| 2 | Nº 37/2001/p „Łeba”, B101 | 2D | 191 km ² |
| 3 | Nº 38/2001/p „Rozewie”, B28 | 2D | 87 km ² |
| | | 3D | 44 km ² |

The only basin in the Polish Baltic Zone (EEZ) in which high speed ferries are used and harbour porpoises appear is the Gulf of Gdańsk including the Puck Bay. The number of hydrofoils does not increase and in the top of the summer season hydrofoils are exploited on lines from Gdańsk, Sopot and Gdynia to Hel and Jastarnia.



Implementation of guidelines, new legislation, etc. to reduce disturbance:

No new legal regulations intended to reduce disturbances for whales in the Polish Baltic Zone (EEZ) were implemented.

At the end of 2008, the project for detonating 500 kg ammunition in the Puck Bay was halted on

request by the Ministry of Environment having regard to a potential risk to the health and lives of harbour porpoises. The project was postponed until a relevant plan for the reduction of its impact is developed.

3. Protected areas for small cetaceans

Measures taken to identify, implement and manage protected areas

In establishing Natura 2000 areas in the Polish Baltic Zone (EEZ), basins in which harbour porpoises appeared and by-catches occurred were taken into consideration. These areas are:

1. Refugium in the Pomerania Bay – PLH990002,
2. Waters covered by the Wolin National Park – „Wolin and Uznam” - PLH320019,
3. Słupsk Bank – „Ławica Słupska” – PLC 990001.
4. Słowiński Bank – „Ostoja Słowińska” – PLH 220023.
5. The Puck Bay and the Hel Peninsula – „Zatoka Pucka i Półwysep Helski” – PLH220032

There are also areas of Polish Baltic waters the importance of which for the protection of harbour porpoises is not confirmed by recent data:

6. The Vistula Mouth Shoal – „Ostoja Ujścia Wisły” – PLH220044,
7. Waters of the Vistula Lagoon and the Vistula Sandbar – „Zalew Wiślany i Mierzeja Wiślana” – PLH280007,
8. The Mouth of the Odra River and the Szczecin Basin – “Ujście Odry i Zalew Szczeciński” – PLH320018.

Advanced operations for the identification of those areas in the aspect of the harbour porpoises protection have been implemented furthest in the Puck Bay where the Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdańsk, Institute of Oceanography has been carrying out a 3-year project for the active protection of these animals against by-catch. The operations include the monitoring of fishing activities with regard to seasonal changes in the strategies of set gillnet fishing. The results of and conclusions derived from the research works are to help to manage the nature protection activities in that area and will enable a more accurate description of the south and east border zones of the Natura 2000 habitat area established in that basin.

It should be noted that amendments to the *Act on environmental protection* and certain other acts strengthened the supervisory powers and competence of the directors of Marine Offices over Natura 2000 areas established in the Polish EEZ.

4. Further research on small cetaceans

Implementation of schemes to use and gain information from stranded cetaceans

The Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdańsk, Institute of Oceanography continues its action of previous years in order to collect information about stranded whales and samples of their tissues are collected by the Station. All dead whales that are brought to the Station are examined to the extend possible. Minimum scope of sampling includes the collection of fat tissues for genetic examination and teeth needed to determine the age of the animal. In 2008, only one case of a stranded harbour porpoise was reported to the Hel Marine Station That animal was found near Mechelinki, in the area of the Puck Bay.



Research on abundance, population structure etc.

Apart from the aforementioned case of a dead animal, no other data such that could complement data on the structure of the population in the Polish Baltic Zone (EEZ) was obtained. Data and materials obtained in the previous years were submitted for genetic analysis which have been carried out within the framework of a German project co-ordinated by FTZ Buesum according to the decisions of the Experts of the Jastarnia Group. The said data are currently developed and will be published soon.

Research on the effects of pollutants on cetacean health

In 2008, no such investigations were carried out.

5. Public awareness and education

Measures taken in the fields of public awareness and education to implement or promote the Agreement

Educational and informative actions covering environmental protection issues pertaining to small

whales were subordinated to requirements of the protection of the Baltic population of harbour porpoises. A new IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, in which the said population was classified under CR (critical risk), confirms the said requirement is well grounded.

The main actions were carried out by the Marine Station of the Gdańsk University, Institute of Oceanography in Hel. Over the whole year an exhibition “The Baltic Sea – House of Harbour Porpoises” was displayed there. The exhibition was arranged in co-operation with the Foundation for the Development of the University of Gdańsk and a local NGO – “The Friends of Hel”.

Funds for actions undertaken in 2008 originated from the budget of the Marine Station of the Gdańsk University, Institute of Oceanography in Hel and the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management. They were assigned in relation to the project of “the Active Protection of Harbour Porpoise against By-Catching”, implemented in the Puck Bay

The educational and informative efforts included, but were not limited to the following actions and events

- A 70 cm x 100 cm poster about the need to protect Baltic harbour porpoises was printed,
- A 16-page brochure “The Baltic Harbour Porpoises” was developed in order to provide public with explanation of the biology and ecology of the Baltic population, existing threats and issues related to its protection. The brochure is intended for national circulation;
- Fishermen were addressed with a 6-page leaflet titled “Fishermen and Harbour Porpoises” developed in order to explain opportunities for the mitigation of a conflict between environmental protection requirements and fishing practices, and a “Pinger” leaflet intended to provide information about the application of acoustic devices in fishing practice in order to reduce the mortality of harbour porpoises, resulting from by-catches;
- Sailors and marines as well as fishermen were addressed with a label prompting people to report observations of harbour porpoises taken over voyages, cruises etc.

In addition to the foregoing, a tinned fish food was manufactured under the label of “The Delicacy of a Harbour Porpoise”. The tin was packed in a case bearing notices about the status of the species

and the promotion of the eco-mark, showing that tinned fish was caught in a manner which is friendly to harbour porpoises

Moreover, 1300 boxes to carry fish were manufactured. On their side walls special symbols and slogans were displayed to promote fishing practices which are friendly to the local habitat. The boxes are distributed amongst fishermen who fish in the Puck Bay using methods which are safe to harbour porpoises

On a number of occasions provided by public events, information stands promoting the protection of Baltic harbour porpoises were arranged. They included

- an outdoor stand was arranged at the monument of the animal in Gdynia during the festival of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise. The stand was intended to promote protection actions carried out by ASCOBANS and the international co-operation for the saving of the lives of these animals in the Baltic Sea;
- an outdoor stand arranged at the Baltic Festival of Science, which promoted the research methods and protection means used by Polish researchers in regard to harbour porpoises;
- an outdoor stand at the “Gifts of the Sea” Festival of Marine Products, Gdynia, Poland. The stand was intended to support the idea of fishing practices helping to protect harbour porpoises and promote the image of the species amongst children and young people;
- a stand at the POLEKO Ecological Fair, Poznań, Poland. The project of the active protection of harbour porpoises in the Puck Bay, performed by the Marine Station of the Gdańsk University, Institute of Oceanography and the general idea of the protection of the species were promoted at that stand

Polish information materials concerning the protection of harbour porpoises were also distributed over the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise, held at the Lithuanian Sea Museum in Klaipėda, Lithuania. A researcher from the Hel Marine Station had a lecture on the protection of the species and protection measures used in Poland. The lecture was specifically addressed to young audience.

Actions for the increase of public awareness were complemented and supported by publications in local and national press, radio broadcasts and tv programmes as well as information displayed on the Internet site of www.morswin.pl.

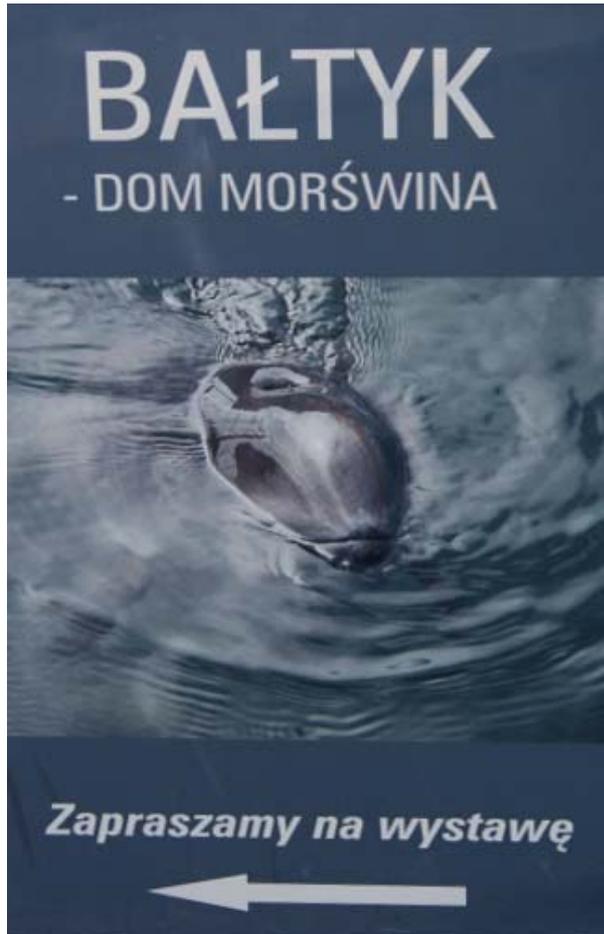
As in the previous years, a similar opportunity to present the requirement to protect small and large

whales in the Baltic Sea was created by the occurrence of a humpback whale near the middle shoreline in summer which event arose a great interest in mass media. A number of interviews were given to journalists from Polish mass media.

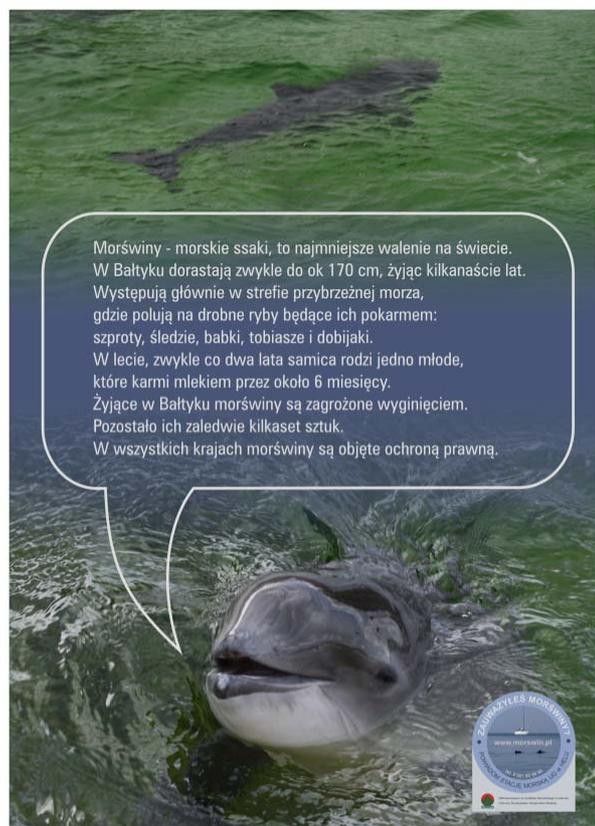
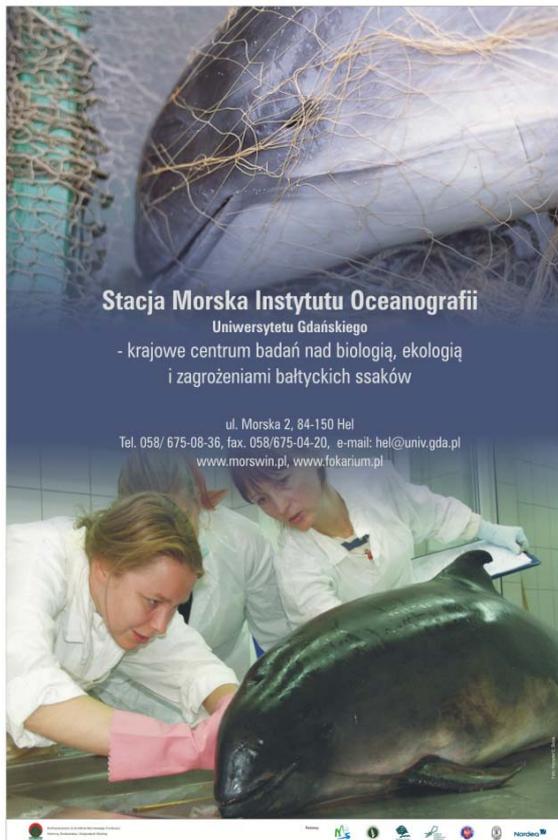
Meetings with fishermen were also held to talk about issues related to harbour porpoises as well as to explain the rationale of Regulation 812/2004/UE and – in particular – its provisions concerning the ban on the use of drifting nets and the scope of the – so called – Observer's Programme

In its effort to promote the image of the harbour porpoise and the awareness of the protection of harbour porpoise being necessary, the shop of the Marine Station and the Foundation for the Development of Gdańsk University has extended its trade offer by new patterns of goods, gadgets and souvenirs.

Exhibition: The Baltic Sea – the House of the Harbour Porpoise



Selected display cases at the exhibition presented in the Marine Station of the Gdańsk University Institute of Oceanography, Hel (47 thousand visitors in 2008).



Selected examples of display boards showing threats to the harbour porpoise and protection measures taken in order to protect the species.

Poster and brochures.



A poster (70 cm x 10 cm) and the covers of brochures: *Fishermen and Harbour Porpoises*, *The Baltic Harbour Porpoise*, *Pinger – the Guard of Harbour Porpoises and the Friend of Fishermen* [www.morswin.pl/index_base.php?Screen_Option=1&Page_ID=97]

Fish boxes.



Boxes are being delivered to Hel.



Label engraved on the lateral walls of the boxes.

Tinned fish



A board promoting the new product



Baltic porpoise-friendly product

The fish that you have just bought was caught in a porpoise-friendly manner, which is certified by the special eco-label on the can.

By choosing this product, you help improve the condition of our sea's natural resources. As conscious shoppers, you can shape the world around you and protect the life of endangered species.

The porpoise is a close relative of orcas and dolphins. A small mammal, 1.5 to 1.7 m long, it is the only cetacean that constantly inhabits the Baltic. The species is under strict protection. Porpoises used to be numerous along our shores until the 1940s. Currently, they are very rare and under serious threat of extinction. It is estimated that only a few hundred of them remain in the entire Baltic Sea. The main reason for the reduction of their Baltic population, alongside growing pollution and disturbance in habitat, are gillnets, which are dangerous for marine mammals, yet increasingly popular. Such nets are often made from thin but very strong nylon fibres that are invisible for marine mammals. When hunting fish, porpoises get caught in such nets and die from lack of air. Once porpoises actually become entangled in such a net they can rarely be saved.

In order to protect porpoises, gillnets ought to be equipped with acoustic deterrents, or their structure should be modified, or other, safer fishing methods should be used.

The sprat you have bought is the favorite food of the Baltic cetaceans. It was caught using a pelagic trawl, which is safer for porpoises.

We thank all fishermen who try to catch fish in a manner friendly to the Baltic ecosystem.

English version

Templates.



Polish version

Notice attached to the fish tin case

Events

International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (ASCOBANS)



The educational stand of the Hel Marine Station of the Gdańsk University at Skwer Kościuszki, (Gdynia, 18 May 2008)

The Baltic Festival of Science.



The information stand of the Hel Marine Station of the Gdańsk University, (Gdynia, 01 Jun 2008)

The “Gifts of the Sea” Festival of Marine Products



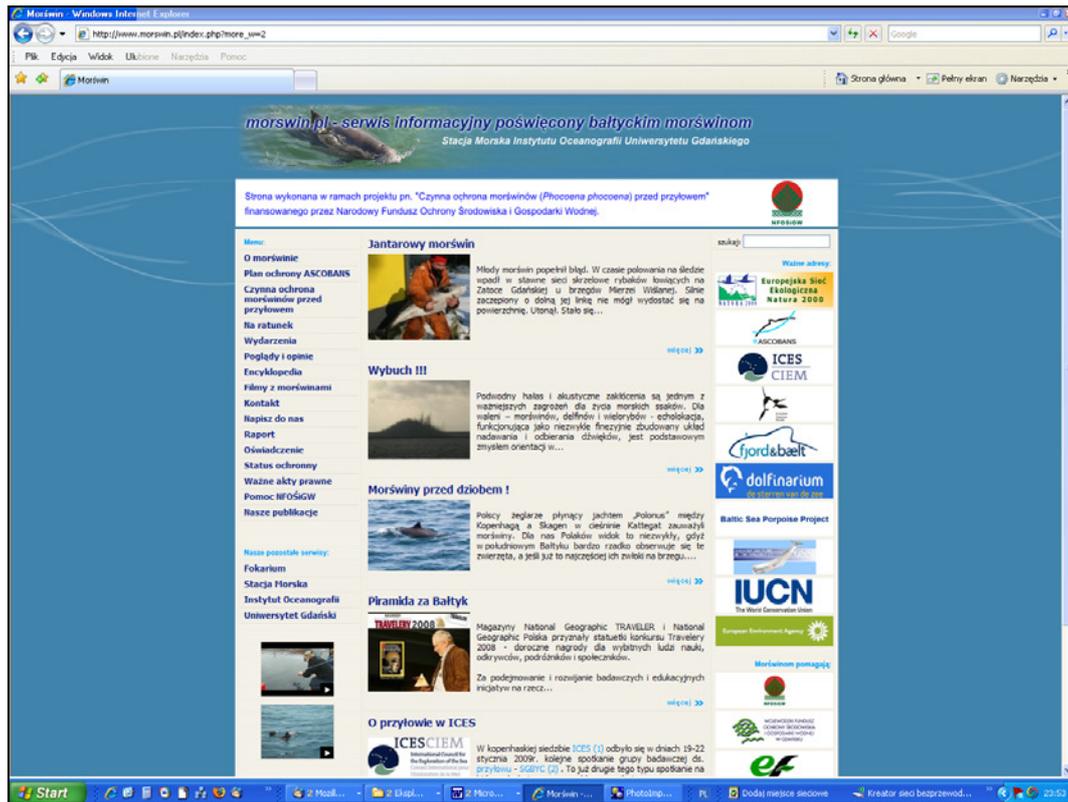
The educational stand of the Hel Marine Station of the Gdańsk University, (Gdynia, 26 Jul 2008)

POLEKO Fairs



The educational stand of the Hel Marine Station of the Gdańsk University, in the main exhibition venue at the ecological fairs -POLEKO, (Poznań, 27-30 Oct 2008)

New Internet site.



www.morswin.pl – Polish Internet site about the harbour porpoise

New label



A label to be used by yachtsmen, sailors, seamen and fishermen

Gadgets



A few samples of gadgets and souvenirs labelled with the image of the harbour porpoise

Press coverage



A few samples of press coverage on problems concerning the Baltic harbour porpoise