

Agenda Item 4.1

Reports

Report of the Chair and Vice-Chair of
the Advisory Committee

Document 4.1

**Evaluation of the Implementation of the
ASCOBANS Work Plan 2017-2020 and the
Work of the Advisory Committee**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Give guidance

Submitted by

AC Chair and Vice-Chair



Note:

Delegates are kindly reminded to bring their own document copies to the meeting, if needed.

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASCOBANS WORK PLAN 2017-2020 AND THE WORK OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Chair and Vice-Chair, ASCOBANS Advisory Committee*

1. [Resolution 8.2](#) of the 8th Meeting of Parties contains the ASCOBANS Work Plan 2017-2020. The Secretariat prepared reports on progress of implementation of the Work Plan for each meeting of the Advisory Committee (AC): [AC23/Doc.1.3](#), [AC24/Doc.1.3](#), and [AC25/Doc.10](#). With this document, we give a personal evaluation of the progress, followed by a table with a scoring index (Annex 1).
2. During the cycle 2017-2020, a new national reporting procedure was applied in accordance with Resolution 8.1. This meant that on a rotational basis, a complete national report would be submitted only once every four years (MOP to MOP), and only certain topics were reported on to meetings of the AC:
 - In 2017, during the 23rd Meeting of the Advisory Committee ([AC23](#)), held in Le Conquet, France, the national reports focused on Underwater Noise, Ocean Energy, Unexploded Ordnance, and Marine Spatial Planning.
 - In 2018, [AC24](#) took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, and the national reports were dedicated to Bycatch, Prey Depletion, Marine Debris, Survey, and Research, Stranding and Necropsy.
 - [AC25](#) in Stralsund, Germany in 2019, was the last AC meeting before MOP9. The national reports covered the following topics: Cetacean Watching Industry, Recreational Use, Pollution and Hazardous Substances, Ship Strikes, Climate Change, Physical Habitat Change, and Marine Protected Areas.
3. As a preamble to this summary report of the work of the Advisory Committee during the 2017-2020 Work Plan, we would like to warmly thank all the participants for their constructive contributions and investment of time so that this Agreement can exist and evolve to further the cause of conserving small cetaceans; the Secretariat for its valuable assistance, before, during and after the meetings; delegates and experts for their effectiveness and for enriching debates; the very active NGOs which have fed the work since the beginning of the Agreement.
4. We would also like to thank the Session Expert-Chairs established during the period of this Work Plan. Their help was very valuable in synthesizing and animating the different topics of the agendas.

Conservation Issues

Underwater Noise

5. The joint CMS/ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS working group produced a full report for AC23. The AC members expressed their satisfaction with the operation of the group. The working group has completed 20 tasks of the 53 assigned. Various questions were raised, notably on the choice of indicators, and whether there was a need for an analysis of data. The need for synergies with the other fora dealing with noise was also raised. As suggested, the joint working group's role is to monitor emerging issues and to advise on pilot studies with a focus on the cumulative effects.

Ocean Energy

6. Concerning this issue, it was clear that there is a need to identify what is needed to be reported and what we consider under “ocean energy”: e.g. windfarms, marine turbines, and oil and gas prospection. The objective is to report the useful and accurate information, in order to determine area of risks and to be able to decide to stop or to amend certain activities. This is another task of the joint working group.

Unexploded Ordnance

7. Most of the Parties do not provide the information requested. So, it was suggested that the Parties be asked to say what is feasible regarding the detailed proposed format. It was also suggested that the ASCOBANS Secretariat approach the OSPAR Secretariat to obtain such information if it is available. We hope to receive feedback from the Parties for the next report.

Marine Spatial Planning

8. On this subject, it seems difficult to move forward in a homogenous manner between the Parties. The difficulty of MSP is being able to update the databases regularly to map the activities presenting a danger. In order to save time, it is necessary to identify what is being done in other fora and organizations to determine the gaps and reformulate the questions accordingly.

Bycatch

9. The observation is that there is a disparity between the reports and the data are sometimes incomplete. Having consistent data is necessary for the next reporting cycle (mapping of fishing effort, information by type of gear and vessels, information on observed fisheries and consistent bycatch data). Close cooperation and synergies with other bodies and stakeholders (ICES WGBYC, WGMME, IWC, OSPAR, HELCOM, etc.) are also guarantees of success. It should be remembered that incidental catches represent the greatest threat to small cetaceans. Almost all the Parties are also Member States of the EU and so, have obligations with the new DCF under the EC Common Fisheries Policy.
10. The recently created Joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS Working Group on Bycatch should help to obtain a clear vision of this issue in both the Agreement Areas and should help to develop and propose other approaches and solutions to reduce significantly the level of bycatch. In March 2020, the Working Group reviewed and made extensive comments and proposed edits to the FAO draft Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries Supplement 4. Guidelines to reduce bycatch of marine mammals in capture fisheries. This Group was scheduled to meet for the first time in May 2020, then October 2020, in France, but the meeting has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the 9th Meeting of the Parties (MOP9), proposed amendments have been prepared to Resolution 8.5 *Monitoring and Mitigation of Small Cetacean Bycatch*.

Resource Depletion

11. The information submitted by the Parties to AC24 in the national reports is incomplete. Nevertheless, it is clear that many institutes are working on fish stocks and on cetaceans' diet. The examination of the blubber thickness by the stranding networks gives an indication but it is not always easy to relate it to a problem of resources. In view of this, several action points were agreed at AC24, including the establishment of a Working Group.
12. With a mandate from AC24, this Working Group was established to (i) review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations and (ii) make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action. A draft resolution on resource depletion has been prepared for MOP9 by the Working Group.

Marine Debris

13. As the impacts of marine debris on cetaceans are not yet clear (outcomes of the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/RAC-SPA workshop, ECS 2018) and as such, there is a need to standardize necropsy protocols in close cooperation with experts.
14. Knowing that a Workshop was planned for the Second World Marine Mammal Science Conference (Barcelona, Spain, December 2019) on the subject, AC25 requested a report to MOP9 on the outcomes of this workshop. It was agreed at AC25 to prepare a draft resolution on marine debris to encourage Parties to collaborate on identifying, prioritizing and mitigating the impacts of marine debris. The draft resolution is available on the MOP9 webpage.

Surveys and Research

15. As was also the case with other issues, the National Reports were incomplete and inconsistent from most countries. This fact is disappointing but probably due to the first round of the new National Reporting format. There is certainly a need for clear guidance to ensure more standardized data from the Parties.
16. National Reports are a way to assess the implementation of the Agreement and to determine the needs to move forwards. Therefore, Parties are encouraged to be more attentive at the time of completing the reports and make sure to call on the right people and experts. One of the positive action points from AC24 was to request Parties to support SCANS-type surveys with a six-year frequency instead of every decade, which is better for estimating abundance trends and being synchronous with the MSFD reporting cycles. Parties are also encouraged to closely collaborate and coordinate in accordance to the species range.

Strandings and Necropsies

17. Strandings are a source of biological samples of small cetaceans that help to improve the understanding of the cause of mortality, reproductive status, and population health. The National Reports on the topic were incomplete. This is probably due to the disparity of the networks and organizations monitoring stranding in the countries. Nevertheless, there is some positive progress on this issue. Indeed, the initiative for having a new international database for marine mammal stranding and necropsy discussed at AC23 was launched.
18. A joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/ECS/IWC/RAC-SPA workshop was held at the ECS conference in 2018 to update the best practice guidelines for strandings. In accordance with Resolution 8.10, a joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS workshop was held in Padua, Italy in June 2019 to harmonize best practice guidelines for stranding events and necropsy. The outcome, [best practice protocol](#), is proposed for adoption at MOP9.

Cetacean Watching Industry and Recreational Sea Use

19. This activity can cause disturbance to cetaceans, and in some countries (France and the UK) the number of whale watching operations has increased, while it remained stable in others. There are several codes of conduct, but there is no common or clear definition of harassment. No swim-with cetacean activities were reported. Parties are urged to produce maps and to keep records of cetacean harassment cases.
20. For EU Member States, there is an obligation for strict measures of protection under the EU Habitats Directive. At this stage, review the information should continue with probably a need for approaches for species and regional codes of conduct. The ASCOBANS Secretariat could post on its website these codes of conduct. As an action point from AC25, the Secretariat will collaborate with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to mitigate pressures from cetacean watching.

Pollution and Hazardous Substances

21. The sources of data are mainly obtained from necropsies of stranded animals. There is a need for more detailed necropsies in that way. The PCBs are the best monitored pollutants. Some countries are not continually monitoring the pollutants. The main important threats identified for cetaceans are PCBs and morbillivirus. The trend of pressure is unknown. Parties are encouraged to continue to ensure the monitoring of pollutants, those known to be endocrine-disrupting as well as pathogens. An Action Point was agreed at AC25 in that ASCOBANS should participate to IWC work on pollutants.

Ship Strikes

22. This issue is relatively new for ASCOBANS, as ship strikes concern particularly large cetaceans but even the cases of collisions with small cetaceans have increased. In some States there are mitigation measures mainly in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Ideally, Parties should identify areas of high risk. As an Action Point from AC25, ASCOBANS should coordinate with the IWC on streamlining national reporting to see how ASCOBANS information could feed into the global IWC ship strike database.

Climate Change and Physical Habitat Change

23. Warming waters, stronger storms, and change in prey distribution - all these changes linked to climate change could affect small cetaceans. Physical habitat changes generated by constructions (wind farms, bridges, marine turbines, sand extraction, etc.) also have an impact on cetacean populations. Therefore, it is important to increase the monitoring of the abundance and the distribution of cetaceans in the Agreement Area.
24. The challenge is to determinate what is relevant to climate change and what is not relevant. In addition, the cumulative effects are more than probable. There is a need of an ecosystem approach. A Resolution in that way has been proposed.

Marine Protected Areas

25. The synthesis of the national reports shows that the designation of MPAs for both Harbour Porpoises and Bottlenose Dolphins was done mainly under the EU Habitats Directive. Some areas have not been designated specifically for cetaceans, but the species do use these sites. Several countries reported conservation objectives and management measures. Surveys and monitoring are reported in certain areas.
26. In order to have a clear vision of the MPAs, AC25 listed as an Action Point that the UK would develop a map of the MPAs for the entire ASCOBANS Agreement area using maps from the Natura 2000, HELCOM, and OSPAR databases.
27. AC25 also agreed that a workshop on management of MPAs for small cetaceans should be organized. Finland offered to host the workshop in April 2020, but the event had to be postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

ASCOBANS Meetings, Working Groups and Workshops

Meetings

28. The ASCOBANS AC has had three meetings during the four-year period: AC23 in September 2017 in Le Conquet, France; AC24 in September 2018 in Vilnius, Lithuania; and AC25 in September 2019 in Stralsund, Germany. At AC23, following MOP8, Sami Hassani (France) and Penina Blankett (Finland) were unanimously re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee for another four-year term.

29. Since the existence of the ASCOBANS Agreement, efforts have focused on the Harbour Porpoise and more recently on the Common Dolphin. But the Agreement is dedicated to all the small cetaceans. It was therefore decided that AC meetings devote special sessions for other species to determine the status, state of knowledge, and the gaps. It started at AC23 on the White Beaked Dolphin, then for the White-sided Dolphin at AC24, and finally for the Beaked Whales at AC25. It was agreed that AC26 would focus on the Bottlenose Dolphin.

Working Groups established during the 2017-2020 Work Plan

30. During the discussions at AC23, it was decided to bring together the two bycatch working groups of the sister Agreements, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS, creating a Joint Bycatch Working Group. This was done to harmonize approaches and to ensure synergies. Reports of the working group can be accessed on the [ASCOBANS website](#).
31. Regarding the emergency of the issue of resource depletion, considered as a potential threat to cetaceans, AC24 decided to establish a dedicated working group. Terms of reference for the group were adopted intersessionally, as requested by AC24.
32. The new National Reporting format was implemented for a better evaluation of the implementation of the Agreement. To improve this format, it was decided in 2018 at AC24, to create a specific intersessional Working Group. This was followed by the organization of a workshop in early 2019.
33. In line with Resolution 8.4, AC24 listed as an Action Point to finalize and approve a Species Action Plan (SAP) for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin, and to reconfirm a Steering Group to support the implementation of the SAP. The first meeting of the group was held prior AC25 in September 2019.

Workshops

34. Each year of the current Work Plan (2017-2020), under the mandate of the Advisory Committee, ASCOBANS Secretariat, AC members and invited experts were involved in various workshops. Some, at the initiative of the Agreement, and others in collaboration with ACCOBAMS, ECS or another organizations. These workshops are a valuable help in moving forward in some of the sensitive issues of the Agreement.
35. Four workshops were organized in cooperation with ACCOBAMS namely an Expert Workshop 'Unacceptable Interactions and Bycatch' in February 2017 in Bonn, Germany, and two workshops at the ECS conference, one on noise in April 2017 in Middelfart, Denmark, and one on marine debris and cetacean stranding in April 2018 in La Spezia, Italy. In addition, a joint workshop was organized in June 2019 in Padua, Italy, on harmonization of the Best Practices for Necropsy of Cetaceans and for the Development of Diagnostic Frameworks.
36. The Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting convened in February 2019 in Bonn, Germany, to develop questions for the national reporting form, covering sections for the year 2019 as mandated in Resolution 8.1. In addition, as mentioned above, a workshop on Management of MPAs for Small Cetaceans was planned to take place in April 2020, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it has been postponed to a later date.

Cooperation with other Organizations

37. For a long time, ASCOBANS wanted to be able to benefit from the insights on EU Policy in order to be in line with its own initiatives, to contribute to a harmonization in the conservation approaches as well as to be able to feed by its expertise on regulatory aspects. In 2018 and 2019, we had the pleasure of welcoming representatives from the European Commission to attend AC and associated meetings. The contribution of these representatives on the new

European regulations (CPF, DCF, Technical Measures Regulation 2019/1241, MSFD), the European fisheries funds (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) was appreciated.

38. Concerning cooperation with fishery sector, there has been improvement especially from the EU Commission side. Representatives from both DG Environment and DG MARE have attended AC meetings as well as meetings of the Jastarnia, North Sea, and Common Dolphin Group. The issue of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise has been discussed at e.g. EUMarine Expert Group Meetings and also at the Baltfish meeting in summer 2020. This looks very promising, as it has taken years for ASCOBANS to raise the critical situation of Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoises to the attention of the Commission.
39. Also, cooperation with the “mother” agreement, CMS, has been good and has given added value and impact to ASCOBANS work. Among others, ASCOBANS Parties were encouraged to submit species proposals for CMS COP13. Unfortunately, the proposal to include the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise and Iberian harbour porpoise to the CMS Annex I failed, but ASCOBANS should encourage Parties to submit it to the next CMS COP, scheduled for 2023.
40. Cooperation with other bodies must be maintained and developed. It is indeed illusory to implement conservation actions without considering what is done elsewhere. Actions must combine, complement, and enrich each other. For a long time, the emphasis has been on exchanges either by representation of ASCOBANS in other instances or by inviting members of these instances. Cooperation with ACCOBAMS is a strong reality and is reflected in joint working groups. This is also true with e.g. IWC, HELCOM, and OSPAR: some of our AC members are also members of these bodies.
41. With NAMMCO, unfortunately, we have not been able to achieve the same cooperation during this reporting period. However, we encourage the maintenance of contacts and efforts to try to establish close cooperation with NAMMCO. Noting that members of ASCOBANS, encouraged by the AC, had participated in NAMMCO’s Harbour Porpoise meetings, such as the Joint International Workshop on the Status of Harbour Porpoises in the North Atlantic, in December 2018 in Norway, and the meeting of the Scientific Committee Working Group on Harbour Porpoise, in March 2019 in Denmark.
42. AC Members and Observers reported back from key meetings and conferences to AC23. Regarding ASCOBANS representation, looking at the [Secretariat report](#) from the four-year period it can be concluded that ASCOBANS has been well represented in many relevant fora.

Species Action Plans

43. During this Work Plan, the Conservation Groups met regularly either the day or a few months before the AC. On behalf of the AC, we would like to express appreciation to the Group Chairs for their volunteer commitments, seriousness, and dependability. Their investment of time makes it possible to facilitate these meetings to evaluate the application of these Plans, to make them live and evolve. We must also thank the historic and new members who have always been active and reactive either in sessions or during the many intersessional exchanges. Each year the work of these Groups is presented during the AC meeting and results in lists of actions and recommendations.
44. In addition to the Baltic Harbour Porpoise Recovery Plan (Jastarnia Plan), the North Sea Harbour Porpoise Conservation Plan, and more recently the Western Baltic Harbour Porpoise Conservation Plan, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat (WBBK), the Parties adopted a new Species Action Plan (SAP) in 2019 dedicated to the Common Dolphin in the North-East Atlantic. As requested by AC25, proposed amendments to Resolution 8.4 have been prepared by the SAP Steering Group. This SAP is also an opportunity to establish close cooperation with the Range States in the Extension Area of the Agreement that are also Parties to ACCOBAMS. The effectiveness of the Plan depends on it entirely.

45. To guarantee the success of these Plans, a transboundary approach is needed as a close collaboration with other bodies concerned with marine species and ecosystems. This is how in 2017, the AC approached the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) Secretariat with the request to further include the Harbour Porpoise under the TWSC and to foster stronger cooperation with ASCOBANS.
46. Therefore, it is imperative to be able to sustain the positions of coordinators for these Plans. So far, thanks to the voluntary contributions that allow coordinator positions of the Harbour Porpoise Plans. The latest in date was a part-time position, which is not enough to ensure a complete mission. It is why, in the case of projects requiring funding, the positions of Coordinators of the Harbour Porpoise Plans and one for the Common Dolphin were listed during AC25.
47. The implementation of the Harbour Porpoise plans, was regularly evaluated by the relevant Steering Groups and coordinators during the reporting period. Progress reports can be found on the [Jastarnia](#) and [North Sea Group](#) meeting pages. Some progress still has to be made to reach all the objectives of the plans. The related groups during their annual meetings have produced very clear reports with lists of action points for endorsement by the AC. We deeply believe that the success of these plans is dependant of close cooperation with the fisheries representatives and also by regular public awareness-raising activities and outreach.
48. It has long been discussed that there is an emerging need to have a coordinator for the ASCOBANS Harbour Porpoise plans. During the four-year period, ASCOBANS funding has been allocated to hire a coordinator and also voluntary contributions from some Parties have made it possible to have coordinators. In 2018 Tiu Similä was appointed as the coordinator, but unfortunately, she could not continue for a long time, and in 2019 Ida Carlén (Chair of the Jastarnia Group) was recruited as the coordinator. Since April 2020, the coordination has been divided between Ms. Carlén (Jastarnia and WBBK Plans) and Peter Evans (North Sea Plan), who also chairs the ASCOBANS North Sea Group. This has been a very positive news for the effective implementation of the Harbour Porpoise plans, but further financial contributions are needed.

Budgetary and Administrative Issues

49. At each of the three AC meetings, the Secretariat has presented a report on budgetary and administrative issues as recommended in the work plan, and Parties have accepted all these reports.
50. At AC24, the issue of the frequency of AC meetings under ASCOBANS was raised and noted that the meetings cycle was heavy compared with most CMS instruments. As requested by AC24, the Secretariat had prepared future options to AC25, for changing the periodicity of intervals between meetings of the AC and the content. The options resulted from comparisons with other instruments of the CMS Family. Four options are [presented](#) to MOP9. The possible revision of AC meetings' frequency and items discussed could bring more time to focus on scientific and conservation issues.
51. During the four-year period there has been less money to fund conservation projects. The main focus for funding has been to secure the coordination of the Harbour Porpoise Plans. There has also been voluntary funding from several Parties. For details of funded projects, see [ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.7.1a](#).
52. It has been important to have a coordinator to enhance the protection of harbour porpoise in the plan areas and improved cooperation e.g. with EU Commission. In addition, in 2019 it was recognised that it would be important to ensure resources for implementation of the Common Dolphin Action Plan. It is very important that the ASCOBANS has also started to have other species action plans in the Agreement area.

Publicity and Outreach

53. We would like to stress the importance of raising awareness. Awareness-raising does not have the prestige of scientific work that it deserves. Indeed, the conservation of species and habitats cannot succeed and be effective without the support of the citizens and stakeholders. And this, starting with the youngest. Parties and NGOs must continue to lead, encourage, and support such actions.
54. At each AC meeting, the Secretariat has reported on its activities concerning outreach. These have been numerous and varied whether in public events, exhibitions, social networks, websites and participation in conferences and meetings. One of the highlights in this reporting period was the 25th anniversary celebration of the Agreement. Part of this celebration was the publication of a book - see [ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.4.2](#) for details - which includes numerous contributions of current and past members of our Advisory Committee.
55. All in all, outreach has been good, lots of information and outreach materials can be found from the ASCOBANS webpage and the ASCOBANS Facebook page has also been a useful channel to promote ASCOBANS activities.

Institutional Issues

Accession to the Agreement and the acceptance of the amendment to the Agreement

56. During this period there has been no change in accession to the Agreement. At the moment, the economic situation has improved in Europe, so there could have been a better opportunity to have more countries to accede to the agreement. Unfortunately, the break of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 will probably change again the economic situation.
57. At AC25, concerning the acceptance for the 2003 amendment to the Agreement, it was noticed that eight of the ten Parties had accepted the amendment extending the Agreement Area - Belgium and Lithuania were the two that had not. Both Parties said that there has been progress, but no official notification has been received yet. Regarding the possibility to have the EU as Party, it was noted that it would be important to first explore the accession of other EU Member States that were Range States of the Agreement but were currently not a Party. Efforts to have more countries to join ASCOBANS should continue in the future.

National reporting

58. Most reports have been received and all the submitted National Reports are available on the [ASCOBANS website](#).
59. MOP8 in 2016 decided to switch to a new reporting procedure whereby only relatively few key issues would be considered at each annual Advisory Committee on a rotational basis (Resolution 8.1). Only once every four years, from MOP to MOP, would a complete national report cycle take place. AC23 was requested to review both the format and the information submitted, as well as recommend follow-up action which would then be
60. To develop the reporting form, AC24 decided to establish an Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting. Given that AC24 did not allocate funding to engage a consultant, and that the group members had limited time and capacity working on a voluntary-basis, the Working Group concentrated on the most critical task: creating national report questions for sections for AC25. Further updates were done during the intersessional period between AC25 and MOP9, but there are still parts of the process that could not be completed, namely national reporting questions for all sections in an online data entry format. That should be task for the upcoming period.

61. The revision of the National Reporting format has required a lot of work, and thanks goes to Meike Scheidat (Chair) and members of the Intersessional Working Group on National Reporting for the work they have done.

Conclusions

62. Thus, if we compare the Work of the Advisory Committee between 2017 and 2020 with the Work Plan 2017-2020, listed in Resolution 8.2, we can note that most of the actions have been carried out. Of course, progress remains to be made. One of these actions is the National Reporting Format. It is in one hand, the way to evaluate the implementation of the Agreement and, on the other hand, the way to obtain comparable and useful data provided by the Parties. It is the reason why it has been included in 'Actions Requiring Funding' in the reporting period.
63. We must ensure that our Conservation Plans as well as Action Points, Recommendations and Resolutions be implemented effectively and coherently. This will not happen without a transboundary approach and without the involvement and acceptance of the professionals of the sea (fishermen and their representatives, other sea users) and other stakeholders. This is why, we really need, as already said, Coordinators for these Plans, even if the Chairs of the Working Groups are doing remarkable work that should be acknowledged once again.
64. There has been significant progress of cooperation both with our sister Agreement and other fora. A good adequacy of European policy and of ASCOBANS must allow an integrated approach. ASCOBANS must remain a forum of proposals and initiatives within the CMS Family and in other regional and international agreements and bodies. Continuous efforts have been made to organize joint workshops with ECS, ACCOBAMS and CMS, and to encourage close collaboration between groups and/or with other agreements and bodies and NGOs.
65. Efforts and progress have been regularly made by Parties, NGOs and the secretariat to promote the agreement and develop information materials. We also have to continue to solicit Range States to accede to the Agreement and to encourage fisheries representatives to attend the AC. We have been pleased to have the EU Commission attend our meetings, both from DG ENV and DG MARE.
66. The Advisory Committee met formally three times between 2017 and 2019. These meetings were supplemented by an enormous amount of time put in by Advisory Committee members in between. We also owe thanks to the valuable and constructive input by representatives from non-Party Range States, IGOs and NGOs. The experts' help in key areas of work has also been indispensable. We are extremely grateful for all of this work, without which most of the above achievements would have not been possible. For future AC meetings, it would be desirable to have representatives of fisheries and other stakeholders to enhance the discussion in keeping with our inclusive and collaborative way of working.
67. Evidence of this fruitful work is the number of Actions Points and Recommendations, the motions for Resolutions that MOP9 must consider, the workshops in which the agreement has been involved, the creation of new Working Groups, and the new Species Action Plan. We need to go even further, to improve the data collection and their standardization.
68. We also need to ensure that the Resolutions are fully effective in the Agreement Area. We have been involved in the work of ASCOBANS for a little over twenty years, so we are able to see the remarkable progress.

Annex 1: Evaluation Index

The evaluation of the Activities in the 2017-2020 Work Plan below is largely subjective and indicates whether the action was addressed sufficiently (++), partly sufficiently (+), partly, but not sufficiently (-), or not addressed (--).

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	Evaluation
Habitat Conservation and Management	
Fisheries-related Threats	
1. Review new information on bycatch and associated strandings, bycatch mitigation and monitoring measures, including remote monitoring and any further new techniques as well as local initiatives, and fisheries effort. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	++
2. Developed a joint working group with ACCOBAMS on bycatch.	++
3. Review whether the following remain appropriate, bearing in mind the overall objective of the Agreement to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for small cetaceans, and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate: (a) the current maximum annual removal rate of 1.7 per cent of the best available estimate of abundance (b) the current intermediate precautionary aim of reducing bycatch to less than 1 per cent of the best available estimate of abundance (c) the objective of restoring and/or maintaining management units or populations to 80 per cent or more of their carrying capacity (d) the assessment/management units that have been proposed for regularly occurring species.	+/-
4. Make recommendations on appropriate triggers indicating when an environmental limit (an unacceptable interaction) is at risk of being reached or exceeded.	-
5. Review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+
Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)	
6. Review new information on underwater noise , its impacts on small cetaceans and their prey species, mitigation measures, technological developments, practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	++
7. Review new information on ocean energy , its impacts on small cetaceans, mitigation measures, technological developments, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
8. Review new information on the cetacean watching industry , impacts on small cetaceans, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+/-
9. Review new information on recreational sea use , impacts on small cetaceans, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
10. Review new information on other sources of disturbance , impacts on small cetaceans, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	Evaluation
11. Review new information on underwater munitions , their impacts on small cetaceans and cetacean habitat, and methods for their environmentally-friendly removal. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
12. Review new information on marine debris (ingestion and entanglement), including microplastics, and its impacts on small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+
13. Review new information on other forms of pollution and hazardous substances, and their impacts on small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+
14. Review new information on ship strikes and their impacts on small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+/-
15. Review new information on climate change and ocean acidification, and the impacts these have on small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
16. Review new information on physical habitat change , e.g. from construction, and its impacts on small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
17. Review new information on any other issues , including emerging issues posing a potential threat, and the impact they have on small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
Management of Cumulative Impacts	
18. Review best practice approaches to management of cumulative impacts on small cetaceans and their habitats, such as marine spatial planning. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	-
19. Contribute to the development of risk maps showing the spatial and temporal (by season) distribution of activities that have an impact on cetaceans, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations (funding may be required).	-
Area-based Conservation / Marine Protected Areas	
20. Review best practice approaches to management of marine protected areas for small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+
21. Contribute to the development of a map of MPAs where cetaceans form part of the selection criteria, for the entire ASCOBANS Area, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations (funding may be required).	-
Species Action Plans and Regional Initiatives	
22. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan), establish further implementation priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan and promote the implementation of the Plan.	++
23. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea, establish further implementation priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan and promote the implementation of the Plan.	++
24. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Conservation Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic, the Belt Seas and the Kattegat, establish further implementation priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan and promote the implementation of the Plan.	++
25. Finalize the Conservation Plan for Common Dolphins and circulate it to the Parties for adoption.	++

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	Evaluation
26. Review progress and actions in the “Extension Area”, maintain or establish collaboration, as appropriate.	-
Surveys and Research	
Biological Information	
27. Review new information on population size, distribution, structure, life-history parameters and causes of any changes in the ASCOBANS Area populations of small cetaceans. Make appropriate recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities.	+
Monitoring Programmes	
28. Review new information on monitoring programmes relevant for small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action	+
Dedicated Surveys and Other Relevant Research	
29. Review new information on dedicated surveys and other research relevant for small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	++
30. Contribute to the development of maps of survey effort, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations where appropriate (funding may be required).	+
Project Funding	
31. Issue call for project proposals when instructed to do so by the Advisory Committee, and conduct consultation on prioritization to the next meeting.	+
32. Prepare for each meeting of the Advisory Committee an overview of approved activities requiring funding.	+
Use of Bycatches and Strandings	
Stranding Networks	
33. Review new information on the establishment and functionality of stranding networks, especially with a view to facilitating liaison and skill-sharing. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+
34. Engage actively in the ongoing work on best practice guidelines for stranding events in the frameworks of the International Whaling Commission and ACCOBAMS.	+
35. Facilitate development of guidelines for responses to individual or groups of small cetaceans at risk in dangerous circumstances.	++
Strandings	
36. Review new information provided through the national reports. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	+
37. Engage actively in the ongoing work on best practice guidelines for necropsies in the frameworks of the International Whaling Commission, the European Cetacean Society and ACCOBAMS.	++
38. Continue monitoring new information on the causes of strandings and mortality of cetaceans, as well as best practice guidance on stranding responses and necropsies, and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate.	++
39. Contribute to the development of a map showing location and numbers of strandings (both dead and alive), including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations where appropriate.	+/-
Information and Education	
Information, Outreach and Education	
40. Make efforts to implement the existing (and possible future) Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan.	+/-

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	Evaluation
41. Review and revise, if necessary, the ASCOBANS Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan, in alignment with the Communication Strategy for Migratory Species (currently in draft).	+/-
42. Develop the ASCOBANS website, including the children's website and other information material as needed, aiming to meet the needs of a wide range of target audiences in the languages of the Agreement Area.	++
43. Support annual celebration of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise on the 3rd Sunday in May.	+
44. Facilitate presentation of the ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award at MOP9.	+
45. Take advantage of attendance at other for a to give presentations or make information available on topics related to ASCOBANS.	++
46. Report on outreach and communication issues to each meeting of the Advisory Committee.	++
47. Work towards strengthening or establishing positive relationships with stakeholders, especially the fishing industry and European fisheries Advisory Councils.	+
Institutional Issues	
ASCOBANS Meetings, Working Groups and Workshops	
48. Ensure Advisory Committee Meetings are organized as scheduled, with papers circulated one month in advance of the meetings.	++
49. Arrange for a special session dealing with a species selected by the previous meeting at each meeting of the Advisory Committee, covering issues such as population status and structure, distribution, abundance, life history, threats and pressures, the conservation status and recommendations for research and conservation actions.	++
50. Organize meetings of regional working groups (Jastarnia Group, North Sea Group) at intervals defined in each group's ToR.	++
51. Organize workshops including at the annual conferences of the ECS on topics of priority interest to ASCOBANS, funding permitting.	++
52. Support intersessional correspondence working groups as needed.	++
53. Seek to secure a host for the 9th Meeting of Parties at least a year in advance of the meeting; otherwise arrange for it to be held in Bonn.	++
Budgetary and Administrative Matters	
54. Report on budgetary and administrative issues to each meeting of the Advisory Committee.	++
55. Prepare draft budget options and resolutions on budgetary and administrative issues for consideration at the last meeting of the Advisory Committee prior to MOP9.	+/-
56. Encourage Parties and partner organizations to provide voluntary contributions for projects prioritised by the AC or outreach initiatives.	++
57. Develop funding arrangements for projects prioritized by the Advisory Committee and Meeting of Parties.	-
Cooperation with Other Organizations	
58. Identify priorities and improve co-operation between ASCOBANS and the European Union.	++
59. Ensure close collaboration with the Secretariats and scientific advisory bodies of CMS Family on all issues of mutual interest.	++
60. Seek to implement the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 (CMS Resolution 11.2) and consider the development of sub-targets.	-

WORK PLAN ACTIVITY	Evaluation
61. Seek to cooperate closely with CBD, ECS, HELCOM, ICES, IWC, NAMMCO, OSPAR, UNCLOS, UNEP and other relevant organizations.	++
62. Seek to collaborate with the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC), the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) established by the European Union, the Regional Coordination Groups, and other relevant organizations addressing bycatch.	++
63. Transmit information on the effects of PCBs on small cetaceans to UNEP, the Stockholm Convention, the CLRTAP Protocol on POPs, HELCOM and OSPAR for further consideration and possible action, and seek to engage with these processes as far as feasible.	-
64. Seek to strengthen collaboration with civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations.	+
65. Compile for each meeting of the Advisory Committee a report of representation of ASCOBANS at other meetings and a list of Dates of Interest	+
66. Insofar as budgetary provisions and guidance by the Advisory Committee allow for it, ensure proper representation at meetings of other the relevant organizations.	+
National Reports	
67. Develop sections of the reporting format one by one, starting with those to be considered in each report and the first Advisory Committee Meeting after MOP8.	++
68. In In developing the detail of each section, consult experts on the subjects in order to ensure that essential information is gathered in a form that standardizes responses and lends itself to statistical analysis as far as possible, and decide which topics should be reported on by region.	++
69. Make full use of the information submitted in order to assess progress in the implementation of the Agreement and make recommendations to Parties.	++
70. Tailor the agenda for each of the meetings of the Advisory Committee to reflect the topics selected for the previous year's national reports.	++
Other Matters	
71. Consider output of informal working group on large cetaceans in the Agreement Area, which summarizes information on the species and addresses aspects of their conservation.	-
72. Promote accession of non-Party Range States and the European Commission to the Agreement	+
73. Present to the Meeting of Parties a summary of, <i>inter alia</i> , progress made and difficulties encountered since the last Meeting of Parties.	++
74. Support Parties, Range States and Agreement bodies in implementing this Work Plan, in so far as primary responsibility does not lie with the Secretariat.	+
75. Present to Parties, each year no later than 30 June, provided all reports have been received sufficiently in advance of that date, a compilation of Annual National Reports.	+