

Agenda Item 2

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

Document NR 1

**2020 Annual National Report:
Poland**

Action Requested

- Take note
- Comment

Submitted by

Poland



ASCOBANS

2020 ASCOBANS National Report

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

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

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

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

- All questions apply to the reporting period of 1 January - 31 December 2020.
- Region in the tables refers to the sub-regions as defined by the HELCOM and OSPAR, and Areas refers to the sub-areas as defined by ICES. An overview and maps of these can be found in **Annex A**. Species can be chosen from the list provided, based on ASCOBANS species list, see **Annex B**.
- Throughout the form, please include relevant web links where applicable.

Where possible, National Coordinators should consult with, or delegate to, experts for particular topics so as to ease the reporting burden. The Secretariat has provided a list of potential country contacts as a starting point. Once the baseline information is in place, it should become easier to update in the future.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat: ascobans.secretariat@ascobans.org.

High-level Summary of Key Messages

In your country, for 2020 (Year 1), what does this report reveal about:

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

>>> A number of long-term, educational campaigns conducted by the Prof. Krzysztof Skóra Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdańsk's Institute of Oceanography.

Establishment of the porpoise monitoring programme within the framework of the State Environmental Monitoring, as a part of the monitoring programme of marine waters (in accordance with the MSFD) and marine species and habitats (in accordance with the Habitats Directive). Harmonisation of the monitoring programme at the Baltic Sea Region level with the HELCOM States Parties (fulfilment of the provisions of the MSFD).

Ongoing work on the preparation of conservation plans for marine Natura 2000 sites, including those where porpoise is a conservation concern.

Ongoing dialogue with the fishing community on the protection of the Baltic Sea ecosystem, including the porpoise.

Started in 2012 and continuing to this day a project to remove lost fishing nets, popularisation of the problem of lost nets in regional and also global level.

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

>>> Deterioration of the Baltic Sea both in terms of species structure and increasing dead, anaerobic areas on its bottom.

Increase of human pressure in marine areas, including expansion of maritime transport, recreation, etc.

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

>>> Rebuild Baltic porpoise populations by improving protection in key areas of their existence, monitoring incidental fishing, and reducing pressure on Baltic harbour porpoises.

Continuation of activities carried out so far, together with the promotion of pro-ecological practices throughout the country, which affects the quality of the waters feeding the Baltic Sea.

I. General Information

A. Country Information

Name of Party / Non-Party Range State:

>>> Poland

Details of the Report Compiler

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

Yes

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Please provide the following details per contributor:

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

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

B. Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ICES Impulsive Noise Register (for HELCOM and OSPAR Parties)

No

National Registry

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

>>> Within the project of the National Marine Waters Protection Programme (NMWPP) it is planned to develop noise maps on the basis of existing information and vessel traffic forecasts using Chief Sanitary Inspectorate's (GIS) environmental tools. It is also planned to create a register of impulsive noise sources on the basis of data from existing environmental impact assessment (EIA) reports and information from relevant institutions. The establishment of the noise register will be coordinated at regional level through Polish participation in the EU expert group ("TG Noise"). The register may also be coordinated by HELCOM. Mapping of noise should be coordinated at local level but taking into account the advice of TG Noise and the project methodology.

Other

No

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

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

No

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

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

>>> The data obtained during the monitoring, along with the interpretation of the research results obtained, were included in the final report from the implementation of the work entitled "Pilot implementation of marine species and habitats monitoring". The data were reported to the SI MGISM (the Information System of Monitoring of Species and Habitats) database and compiled in an Access format file.

Two algorithms have been used to analyse the records, namely KERNO and HEL1. The second algorithm (HEL1) has been developed specifically for the detection of porpoises in the Baltic Sea based on work carried out in Poland at the Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdańsk's Institute of Oceanography (SMIOUG) in 2010.

The use of the second algorithm is recommended for areas of low porpoise numbers in the Baltic Sea.

The KERNO algorithm is used to automatically identify a series of cliques (clique clusters) and recognises their

four properties:

- data quality class based on the probability of origin of cliques - random artefacts or emitted by cetaceans in a narrow high frequency band (porpoises): high, medium, low, and questionable,
- class of cliques (of cetacean species): sounds of porpoise characterised by NBHF (Narrow Band High Frequency), other cetaceans (dolphins), sonar, unknown,
- quality of species classification: high, medium, low,
- ICI classification quality: using the KERNO classifier, only series of cliques of high and medium quality, belonging to species emitting in the NBHF of the ICI series, have been selected for export.

The HEL1 algorithm is used to remove false detections resulting mainly from unclear series from unknown sources.

Three types of quantitative measures are used to detect the occurrence (presence/absence) of porpoises in the study area:

- minutes of positive detections of porpoises per hour (sum of minutes during which the presence of porpoises was recorded in each hour,
- days of positive porpoise detections,
- the number of recorded porpoises clipping series.

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

Unknown

4. Ocean Energy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No

Not Applicable. Comments:

>>> At the moment there are no offshore wind farms in the Polish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), but their construction is planned. It is estimated that the first offshore wind farm will be connected to the power grid in 2025.

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

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

No

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

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

- No
 Not Applicable. Comments:

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

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

- No

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

- No

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

>>> Due to the lack of renewable energy installations, there are no studies to assess the environmental impact of such installations. The environmental impact, as well as mitigation and remedial measures of the planned offshore wind farms will be determined within the environmental impact assessment procedure. Investors applying for permits rely, among others, on the experience of other Baltic countries on this issue.

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

8. Unexploded Ordnance

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

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

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

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

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

- Yes

Please provide details:

>>> In 2020, 3 naval mines were neutralised, located in the area under the jurisdiction of the Director of the Maritime Office in Gdynia.

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

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

>>> Maritime Authorities are responsible for the coordination of operations involving the detonation of explosives in marine areas. Prior to the detonation, they always apply to the Regional Directorates for Environmental Protection (RDEP) for permission to derogate from the prohibitions applicable to protected animal species.

The RDEP decision they receive allows the animals to be disturbed and scared.

Safety zones are established around the facilities to be neutralised.

During the 2 hours preceding the elimination of a particular object:

- high-speed motorboats shall be used, which will stagger the circles started from the centre of the scare area,
- the scare area shall be passed through by vessels with echolocation equipment switched on (scaring of

mammals).

The scaring operation shall be carried out twice prior to neutralisation of each dangerous object.

In addition, small underwater explosive charges, so-called micro charges, may also be used to scare animals during the neutralisation of unexploded.

From 2014 to 2020, the above-mentioned activities were based on scientific advice from the Prof. Krzysztof Skóra Hel Marine Station of the University of Gdańsk's Institute of Oceanography.

Since the Jastarnia Group meeting in June 2020, work is underway to develop new methods with more modern protective measures.

According to the order of the Commander of the Navy No. 148/SIM dated 30 October 2013, the institution responsible for clearing beaches of the seacoast of Pomerania (Pomorskie) and Warmia-Masuria (Warmińsko-Mazurskie) Voivodships from explosive and dangerous objects is the 3rd Ship Flotilla, while for beaches of the seacoast of Western Pomerania (Zachodnio-Pomorskie) Voivodship and marine areas of Poland the 8th Coastal Defence Flotilla is responsible.

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

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

>>> Decision support on dumped ammunition Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020,

Support for decision-making on how to deal with dumped ammunition on the bottom of the Baltic Sea Maritime Institute in Gdańsk Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020,

Decision support on dumped ammunition Jarosław Dąbrowski Military University of Technology Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020,

Decision support on dumped ammunition Polish Naval Academy of the Heroes of Westerplatte Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020,

Characterisation of interactions between, dumped in the Baltic, chemical warfare agents (CW agents) and water by means of experimental studies and first-principles calculations - University of Białystok,

Toxicity and biodegradation of chemical weapons dumped in the marine environment - PRELUDIUM, Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

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

Staying the same

Not Applicable. Comments:

>>> In the future, it is planned to build wind farms, which will certainly increase the noise level at the stage of their construction.

D. Management of Cumulative Impacts

15. Marine Spatial Planning

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

Relevant Resolutions 9.1, 8.9, 8.6, 8.3

A growing demand for use of maritime space increases pressure on ecosystems and marine resources.

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

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

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

National plan(s) and processes in force:

>>> Maritime Spatial Plan of Polish Sea Areas in scale 1:200 000

National plan(s) and processes in preparation:

>>> The Spatial Development Plan for Polish sea area has been drafted, but in accordance with national law, it will be adopted in the form of a regulation of the Council of Ministers. Legislative work is advanced, and it is expected that the regulation on the adoption of the plan will enter into force on 31 March 2021.

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

>>> https://www.umgdy.gov.pl/?page_id=2161

Transboundary plan(s) and processes in force:

>>> The draft development plan for the Polish Sea Areas on a scale of 1 : 200 000 underwent consultations with vulnerable countries as part of the strategic environmental assessment: <https://polishmsp.eu/>

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

Yes

Provide provide details:

Provide provide details:

>>> Departament Gospodarki Morskiej, Ministerstwo Infrastruktury

