
10th MEETING OF THE PARTIES
Odense, Denmark, 10-12 September 2024
Agenda Item 5.2

ASCOBANS WORK PLAN 2025-2028

(Prepared by the Intersessional Working Group on WPA 50 and the Secretariat)

1. This draft Work Plan is based on the Work Plan for 2021-2024 ([Resolution 9.1](#)). The table contained in Annex 1 to this document combines activities from the Work Plan and issues included in the outline for the reporting format for ASCOBANS. The structure is based on that of the Agreement's Conservation and Management Plan as far as applicable. The related draft Resolution is available in [ASCOBANS/MOP10/Doc.5.2a](#).
2. The Intersessional Working Group on Work Plan Activity (WPA) 50 was established at the 28th Meeting of the Advisory Committee to undertake a work prioritization exercise, involving ranking the different activities of the Work Plan. Preliminary prioritisation is indicated in the Annex for each activity.
3. Criteria for the prioritisation were applied as follows:
 - High: important topic, severe threat to small cetaceans, or an urgent activity with a defined deadline.
 - Medium: 'low-hanging fruit', relatively easy to do or to make progress on.
 - Core / ongoing: activity that is part of the core functions of the Secretariat or the Advisory Committee, or an ongoing activity.
4. In some of the Work Plan activities, text has been kept in square brackets so that it can be finalised at MOP10.

Action requested:

5. The Meeting of the Parties is requested to review and adopt the Work Plan 2025-2028 in Annex 1.

**Annex 1 to Resolution 10.[X]:
ASCOBANS WORK PLAN 2025-2028**

Work Plan Activity	Link to Extant Resolutions	Action by	Timing	Priority
Habitat Conservation and Management				
Fisheries-related Threats				
1. Review new information on bycatch and associated strandings, bycatch mitigation and monitoring measures, including remote electronic 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.	9.2 [Rev.MOP10] Baltic Proper Harbour Porpoise 8.3 Jastarnia Plan 8.4 (Rev.MOP9) Common Dolphins 8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
2. Identify future pilot studies for bycatch mitigation, taking into account the outputs of the review of mitigation measures in fisheries with high bycatch within the ASCOBANS Agreement Area, and in close liaison with other initiatives (e.g. IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and CIBBRiNA).	8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups, in particular the Joint Bycatch WG)	As soon as possible	High
3. [Reference to the work regarding conservation objectives?] Make recommendations on appropriate triggers indicating when an environmental limit (the sum of all interactions within the environment that impact animals) is at risk of being reached or exceeded.	8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	High
4. Review new information on resource depletion and its impacts on small cetacean populations. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	9.4 Food Availability and Resource Depletion 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)				
5. Review new information on underwater noise , its impacts on small cetaceans and their prey species, mitigation measures, monitoring, technological developments, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.6 [(Rev.MOP10)] Ocean Energy 8.8 Munitions 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 8.11 (Rev.MOP9) Noise EIA Guidelines 6.2 [(Rev.MOP10)] Offshore Construction 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups, in particular the Joint Noise Working Group)	2025	Core / ongoing
6. [Assess whether national navies' mitigation protocols for use of military sonar are effective. This requires Parties to request the mitigation protocols	8.8 Munitions 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups,	2025	High

Work Plan Activity	Link to Extant Resolutions	Action by	Timing	Priority
from the navies.] [dependent on whether the workshop with navies & NATO takes place in 2024]	8.11 (Rev.MOP9) Noise EIA Guidelines 5.4 Adverse Effects	particularly the Joint Noise WG) / Parties		
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.	8.6 [Rev.MOP10]] Ocean Energy 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 6.2 [Rev.MOP10]] Offshore Construction 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2025	Core / ongoing
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.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
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.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
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.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)				
11. Review new information on unexploded ordnance and underwater munitions and, their impacts on small cetaceans and cetacean habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities and fora, such as OSPAR and HELCOM for further action.	8.8 Munitions 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2025	Core / ongoing
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.	9.3 Marine Debris 8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
13. Review new information on other forms of pollution and hazardous substances, and their impacts on small cetaceans and cetacean habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.7 PCBs 8.9 Cumulative Impacts 7.4 Chemical Pollution 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
14. Review new information on ship strikes and their impacts on small cetaceans. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts 5.4 Adverse Effects	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
15. Review new information on climate change and ocean acidification, and the impacts these have on small cetaceans, as for example	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing

Work Plan Activity	Link to Extant Resolutions	Action by	Timing	Priority
distribution, habitat, and prey. 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.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
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.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
Management of Cumulative Impacts				
18. Review best practice approaches to management of cumulative impacts and ecosystem-based approach for small cetaceans and their habitats, such as marine spatial planning. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.9 Cumulative Impacts	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2025	Core / ongoing
19. Contribute to the development or updating 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 (in the context of marine spatial planning), taking into account the work done by other organizations such as ICES, HELCOM and OSPAR.	[10.] National Reporting] [10.X MSP]	AC	2028	Medium
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.	[10.X National Reporting] 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2027	Core / ongoing
21. Contribute to the development or updating of the 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.	[10.X National Reporting]	AC	2028	Medium
Surveys and Research				
Biological Information				
22. Review new information on population size, distribution, structure, life-history parameters and causes of any changes in the ASCOBANS Area of populations of small cetaceans. Make appropriate recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities.	[10.X National Reporting] 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
Monitoring and Survey Schemes				

Work Plan Activity	Link to Extant Resolutions	Action by	Timing	Priority
23. 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.	[10.X National Reporting] 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
24. 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.	[10.X National Reporting] 5.7 Research 4.7 Populations 3.5 Population Studies	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
[25. Develop a mechanism to structurally fund SAMBAH and SCANS surveys on a regular basis.]		AC	[tbc]	High
26. Contribute to the development or updating of maps of survey effort, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations where appropriate. [clarify wording]	[10.X National Reporting]	AC	2028	Medium
Species Action Plans and Regional Initiatives				
27. 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.	8.3 Jastarnia Plan 7.1 Porpoise Conservation 6.1 Jastarnia and North Sea Plans	Jastarnia Group	At each meeting	Core / ongoing
28. 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.	7.1 Porpoise Conservation	Jastarnia Group	At each meeting	Core / ongoing
29. 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 (following national consultations and any national conservation plans) and promote the implementation of the Plan.	[10.X North Sea Plan] 7.1 Porpoise Conservation 6.1 Jastarnia and North Sea Plans	North Sea Group	At each meeting	Core / ongoing
30. Evaluate progress in the implementation of the Species Action Plan for the North-East Atlantic Common Dolphin, promote its ongoing implementation, establish further priorities, carry out the periodic review of the Plan.	8.4 (Rev.MOP9) Common Dolphins	Common Dolphin Group	At each meeting	Core / ongoing
31. Review progress and actions in the "Extension Area", maintain or establish collaboration, as appropriate.	10.[X] National Reporting 7.3 Actions in Extension Area 5.3 Extension of Area	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	As agreed	Medium
32. Consider output of the informal working group on large cetaceans in the Agreement Area, which summarizes information on the species and addresses aspects of their conservation.		AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	As agreed	Medium

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33. Update the Report of the [Intersessional] Working Group on Beaked Whales for MOP11. [to be removed if the WG is dissolved at MOP10]	[10.X Beaked Whales]	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2028	[Tbc]
34. Update the Report of the [Intersessional] Working Group on Lagenorhynchus species for MOP11. [to be removed if the WG is dissolved at MOP10 or combined with the Data Deficient Taxa WG]		AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2028	[Tbc]
35. Update the Report of the Discussion Group on the Iberian Harbour Porpoise for MOP11. [to be removed if MOP10 decides no further work is required]		AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2028	[Tbc]
Use of Strandings Records				
Stranding Networks and Strandings				
36. Review new information on the establishment and functionality of stranding networks , particularly the European strandings database, especially with a view to facilitating liaison and skill-sharing. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
37. 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. [Include something about DNA-samples?]	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response 5.7 Research	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	2026	Core / ongoing
38. [Engage actively in the ongoing work on best practice guidelines for stranding events in the frameworks of the International Whaling Commission and ACCOBAMS.]	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups) / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	[tbc]
39. Facilitate development of guidelines for responses to individuals or groups of live small cetaceans at risk in dangerous circumstances.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC (incl. relevant Working Groups)	Throughout the intersessional period	Medium
40. Standardize reporting procedures of Post-Mortem Examinations statistics, using the joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigation and tissue sampling.	8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC / Secretariat / Parties	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
41. Contribute to the development or updating 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.	[10.X National Reporting] 8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response	AC	2028	Medium
Information and Education				
Education and Outreach				
42. Assess the need for information material on conservation issues facing	5.8 Education and Promotion	AC (incl. relevant	Throughout the	Core /

Work Plan Activity	Link to Extant Resolutions	Action by	Timing	Priority
small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS Area, and develop material as necessary.		Working Groups)	intersessional period	ongoing
43. Update the ASCOBANS 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.	5.8 Education and Promotion	Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
44. Support annual celebration of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise on the 3 rd Sunday in May.	9.2 [Rev.MOP10] Baltic Proper Harbour Porpoise 8.3 Jastarnia Plan	Parties / Partners / Secretariat	Every year	Core / ongoing
45. Facilitate presentation of the ASCOBANS Outreach and Education Award at the 11 th Meeting of the Parties.		Secretariat / AC	2028	Core / ongoing
46. Take advantage of attendance at other fora to give presentations or make information available on topics related to ASCOBANS.		Secretariat / Parties / Partners	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
47. Report on communication and outreach matters to the Advisory Committee.		Secretariat	For each AC meeting	Core / ongoing
Institutional Issues				
Meetings, Working Groups and Workshops				
48. Organize Advisory Committee Meetings as scheduled, with papers circulated one month in advance of the meetings.		Secretariat	For each AC meeting	Core / ongoing
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.		AC / Secretariat	For each AC meeting	Core / ongoing
50. Organize meetings of regional working groups (Jastarnia Group, North Sea Group, Common Dolphin Group) at intervals defined in each group's TOR.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
51. Organize workshops including at the annual conferences of the ECS on topics of priority interest to ASCOBANS, funding permitting.		Secretariat	As instructed	Core / ongoing
52. Support intersessional working groups as needed.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
53. Seek to secure a host for MOP11 at least a year in advance of the meeting; otherwise arrange for it to be held in Bonn.		Secretariat	2027	Core / ongoing

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Project Funding				
54. Issue call for project proposals when instructed to do so by the Meeting of the Parties or the Advisory Committee, and conduct consultation on prioritization to the next meeting.		Secretariat	As instructed	Core
55. Prepare for each meeting of the Advisory Committee, and for MOP, an overview of activities requiring funding.		Secretariat	For each AC meeting & MOP	Core
Budgetary and Administrative Matters				
56. Report on budgetary and administrative issues to the Advisory Committee.		Secretariat	For each AC Meeting	Core / ongoing
57. Encourage Parties and partner organizations to provide voluntary contributions, and seek new sources of funding for projects prioritized by the AC or for outreach initiatives.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
Cooperation with Other Organizations				
58. Identify priorities and complementarity and improve cooperation between ASCOBANS and institutions of the European Union.		AC / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
59. Ensure close collaboration with the Secretariats and scientific advisory bodies of the CMS Family on all issues of mutual interest.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
60. Seek to cooperate closely with ECS, HELCOM, ICES, IWC, NAMMCO, OSPAR, UNCLOS, UNEP and other relevant organizations by determining possible win-wins.	[10.X Beaked Whales] [10.X Recreational Activities] 9.3 Marine Debris 8.6 [(Rev.MOP10)] Ocean Energy 8.7 PCBs 8.8 Munitions 8.10 (Rev.MOP9) Stranding Response 5.8 Education and Promotion	AC / Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
61. 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, the IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative, and other relevant organizations addressing bycatch.	8.5 (Rev.MOP9) Bycatch	AC	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
62. Work towards strengthening or establishing positive relationships with		AC / Secretariat	Throughout the	Core /

Work Plan Activity	Link to Extant Resolutions	Action by	Timing	Priority
stakeholders, especially the fishing industry and European Fisheries Advisory Councils.			intersessional period	ongoing
63. Compile a list of Dates of Interest and report back on issues relevant to ASCOBANS to each meeting of the Parties and Advisory Committee. This requires participants at meetings identified in the list to confirm their attendance by email to the Secretariat after the meeting.		Secretariat / Parties / Partners	For next MOP and each AC meeting	Core / ongoing
64. Insofar as budgetary provisions and guidance by the Advisory Committee allow for it, ensure proper representation at meetings of other relevant organizations.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
National Reports				
65. Identify and, where possible, address any issues that Parties might encounter regarding the compilation of the National Report.		Secretariat	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
66. 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.		Secretariat	For next MOP and each AC meeting	Core / ongoing
67. Make full use of the information submitted in order to assess progress in the implementation of the Agreement and make recommendations to Parties.		AC	Annually	Core / ongoing
Other Matters				
68. [Promote accession of non-Party Range States and the European Commission to the Agreement.] [AC to provide advice to the Secretariat regarding promoting accession of non-Party Range States and the European Commission to the Agreement]		[Secretariat] [AC]	Throughout the intersessional period	Core / ongoing
69. Present a summary of i.a. progress made and difficulties encountered since the last Meeting of the Parties.		Secretariat	For MOP	Core