



Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area,
concluded under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone Atlantique adjacente, conclu
sous l'égide de la Convention sur la Conservation des Espèces Migratrices appartenant à la Faune Sauvage (CMS)



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ACCOBAMS SURVEY INITIATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

*Delegates are kindly invited to bring their own documents to the Meeting.
This document will be available only in electronic format during the Meeting.*

ACCOBAMS SURVEY INITIATIVE
PROGRESS REPORT NOVEMBER 2019



Figure 1- Sperm whale observed during the ASI boat-based survey on Song of the Whale, August 2018.

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INTRODUCTION

The “ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative”, officially launched during the Sixth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Monaco, 22-25 November 2016) is a major project that aims to establish an integrated, collaborative and coordinated monitoring system for the status of cetacean populations at the whole ACCOBAMS area level, with the final aim to strengthen the conservation effort and governance for cetacean species. Developed and implemented by the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat, in coordination and with the support of riparian countries and national scientists and experts, the ASI represents an unprecedented effort and a first step towards the regular assessment of cetacean abundance and distribution at the Agreement area level.

This programme is particularly important in respect to several regional policies related to marine biodiversity conservation and marine resources management. In particular, the ASI contributes to support the countries in achieving their commitments regarding the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach process of the Barcelona Convention, the implementation of EU Regulations and Directives (Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives), as well as other relevant international instruments such as the Aichi targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity or the Sustainable Development Goal 14 of the United Nations.

Note: When referring in this report to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, this includes the whole program and by extension it also refers to actions carried out through the CeNoBS project, which allowed the implementation of the Survey in the Black Sea.

1-ASI PROJECT COORDINATION

The ASI project is entirely coordinated by the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat with the support of an ASI project officer who was recruited in April 2017 for the entire duration of the project. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat also acts as a partner of the CeNoBS project and is responsible for the Activity 2.2: Assessment of cetacean populations distribution and abundance at the regional scale, which includes the implementation of an aerial survey for cetaceans in the Black Sea

The ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat is responsible in implementing all the actions planned in the ASI, either directly or by coordinating the work of all involved stakeholders and entities mobilized for the project. In total, several actions have been implemented since the launch of the ASI project, including activities related to the logistical preparation of the survey (plane companies contracting, boat selection, team contracting, team daily life organisation and follow up on the field), all administrative and permits processes, the selection and recruitment of all consultants, the development of specific partnerships, the organisation of workshops and meetings, fundraising efforts, reporting to funders, communication strategy development and implementation, representation in different fora of interest, etc.

In addition to the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat work and the countries’ contributions, the ASI project benefits from the involvement of a great number of partners, and of the following key stakeholders in particular:

ASI Steering Committee:

The ASI Steering Committee is composed by representatives of key partnering entities (IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA), Agence Française pour la Biodiversité (AFB), Observatoire Pelagis of the University of La Rochelle, Italian

National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and the Chair of ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee). Representative of the Bucharest Convention Secretariat is also available to take part in the ASI Steering Committee, according to the specific needs related to the Black Sea survey.

The ASI Steering Committee provides advice and guidance to the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat for all aspects linked with the coordination of the ASI project. The ASI Steering Committee met and consulted numerous times during the preparatory phase of the Survey and advised on several strategical aspects, including budget planning, selection of platforms and partners, but also teams review, scientific effort definition, etc.

The ACCOBAMS National Focal Points and the ASI Contact Group Members:

This ASI contact group is composed of (a) contact person(s) from each country who were nominated by the National Focal Points of ACCOBAMS (NFP) in 2014 in accordance with Resolution 5.9 “Comprehensive cetacean population estimates and distribution in the ACCOBAMS area (ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative)”. The NFP and Contact person’s roles are to assist the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with several tasks along the course of the ASI project to facilitate the latter. During the survey preparation phases, NFP and Contact Group Members have been mobilized intensively during a consultative process



Figure 2. ASI Contact Group Member Workshop – Tunisia, 2017.

for the implementation of the survey in their respective countries (visits, meetings, e-mail exchanges, etc.) which was consolidated during the 1-week Regional Workshop of the ASI Contact Group held in Tunisia (3-5 October 2017). ASI Contact Group Members have also often supported the field operations during the survey, and many of them were part of the observation teams. Regular contact and consultation has also been ongoing for the implementation of the other ASI survey activities such as capacity building or data analysis.

ASI Scientific Coordinator and his *ad hoc* support team:

The ASI Scientific Coordinator was selected at the beginning of the project in early 2017 in order to support the ACCOBAMS Secretariat on all the scientific issues related to the implementation of the project.

The ASI Scientific Coordinator has been working with the support of an *ad hoc* team, to develop all methodological aspects (survey design, protocols, platform selection, equipment), select and training for the observer teams and to ensure data acquisition and management by coordinating and assisting all the aerial and boat based scientific teams during the monitoring efforts. Following the successful survey implementation in 2018, and in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the mission, the ASI Scientific Coordinator and his team’ responsibilities were extended to the implementation of the data analysis process, after acceptance of a detailed proposal by the ASI Steering Committee.

As part of the Scientific Coordinator team, the PELAGIS Observatory (La Rochelle University) has been heavily involved in the preparation of the aerial survey campaign and its implementation, in particular

by assisting the ASI Scientific Coordinator with all aspects linked to the use of the SAMMOA software (preparation of the software, training to the observers, assisting during the survey, verifying and preparing the data collected on SAMMOA for the data analysis) and advising on the implementation of cetaceans large-scale surveys. Pelagis Observatory is also actively involved in the development and implementation of the ASI Data Analysis component.

Marine Conservation Research International (MCR) is as well a key scientific partner of the ASI project, and has been supporting and assisting the ACCOBAMS Secretariat with the implementation of all aspects of the ASI vessel-based survey component (planning, logistics, vessel requirements and survey equipment needs, survey methodology, training for participants, survey implementation with the R/V Song of the Whale, data management and analysis.)

2-PROJECT FUNDING SCHEME

The idea of a macro-regional large-scale survey to assess the abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area has been on the agenda of ACCOBAMS for more than 15 years. However, the important resources needed for this effort implied a strategical and long fundraising process. From 2014 to 2019, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat, with the support of consultants, has developed proposals and contacts with different potential funders. In 2016, MAVA Foundation agreed to provide a significant financial support that was going to complement the ACCOBAMS secured funds for the ASI project, including the voluntary contributions granted by Spain in 2008, by Italy in 2015, by France and by Monaco in 2016. A co-funding from the Prince Albert 2 Foundation was also granted in 2016, consolidating the ASI budget for conducting the Survey and other activities in the Mediterranean Sea. Additional voluntary funding was provided by Italy in 2018, by Slovenia in 2019; IFAW also provided co-funding to support specific survey actions of the ASI through MCR.

In addition to the financial support described above, all participating countries have provided in kind contributions to the project, through the mobilization of Contacts group members, National Focal Points and scientific staff, and though a crucial support regarding administrative aspects, meetings and ASI events organization.

While the ASI budget was secured for the Mediterranean, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat pursued its effort in identifying relevant funding to support the implementation of the survey in the Black Sea as well. In 2018, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat and several partners from the Black Sea developed the **CeNoBS project - support MSFD implementation in the Black Sea through establishing a regional monitoring system of cetaceans (D1) and noise monitoring (D11) for achieving GES**. CeNoBS was granted a financial support from the DG Environment of the European Commission and benefited from the co-funding secured by ACCOBAMS. CeNoBS project started to be implemented in January 2019 for a 2-year duration.

3- SURVEYS EFFORT AND EXPERIMENTATION

A detailed report of the ASI Survey implementation is available in the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative technical reports (document ACCOBAMS-MOP7/2019/Inf33). This comprehensive and detailed document provides the description of all steps and actions taken towards the successful implementation

of the surveys, as well as preliminary results and recommendations for the use of future regional survey efforts. A summary of the Surveys actions implemented in 2018 and 2019 is provided below.

Mediterranean Surveys

Following an intensive preparation phase lasting more than one year, the ASI survey in the Mediterranean Sea started in June 2018, just after the organization of two workshops to train all the cruise leaders and the observers for the aerial component (France, in May 2018) and the team leaders involved in the visual and acoustic effort from research vessels (Greece, June 2018).

Data collection in the Mediterranean Sea was concentrated during the summer of 2018. 8 planes and 3 different research boats were used during this period, with almost 100 scientists and researchers involved.

Aerial surveys were conducted over 75% of the area, and this effort was complemented by ship-based visual and acoustic surveys, to monitor waters where it was not possible to use dedicated airplanes and to collect data on deep diving species, such as beaked and sperm whales.

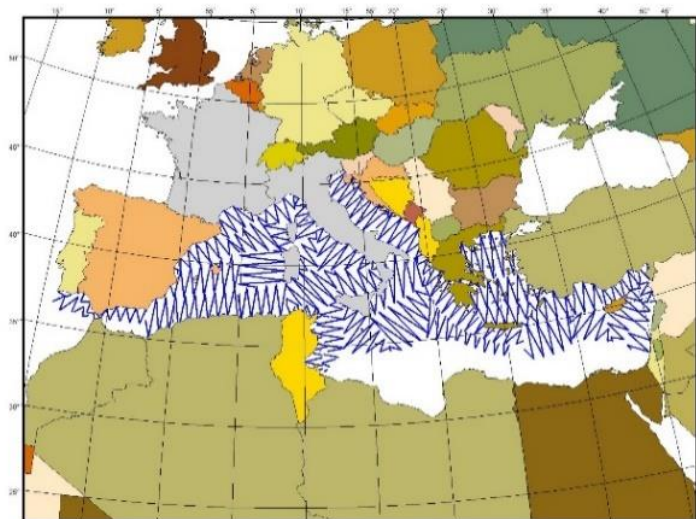


Figure 3- Planned transects of the ASI aerial survey

Data collection was mainly conducted at the same time during the summer 2018, in order to allow a synoptic coverage of the entire Mediterranean Sea. However, due to complex political and security situations, a few areas could be surveyed only in 2019: a dedicated survey was conducted in August 2019

in Syrian coastal waters and the Egyptian boat surveys are now being implemented (October 2019). There is confidence that the different period for some areas will not negatively affect the overall results.

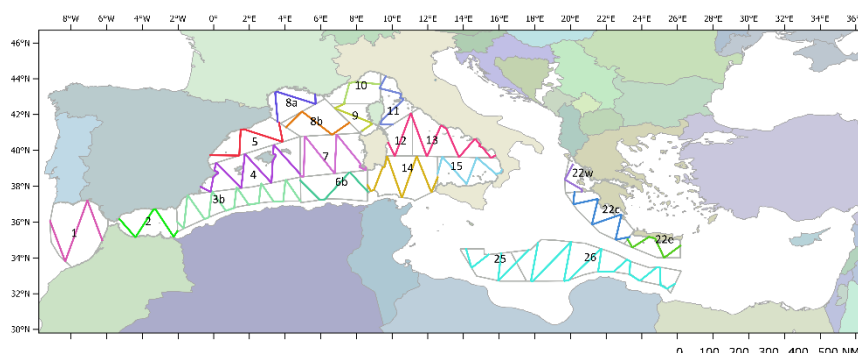


Figure 4- Planned transects and blocks of the ASI Boat survey with Song of the Whale

Black Sea Survey

Following the same scientific approach and tools used during the Mediterranean Sea aerial surveys, the aerial regional survey was conducted in the Black Sea during the summer 2019, in the context of the CeNoBS project (see funding scheme). Coordinated by Mare Nostrum (CeNoBS Project Leader) and the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat, the 6 months intensive survey preparation phase allowed to fine tune the survey protocols and transects design while putting in place all the necessary conditions for the good implementation of the survey: aircraft company selection and contracting, permits and

authorization requests, teams selection and training, communication tools. Under the lead of the ASI/CeNoBS Scientific coordinator, two teams of scientists from Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine collected data over the waters of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine during three weeks in June 2019.

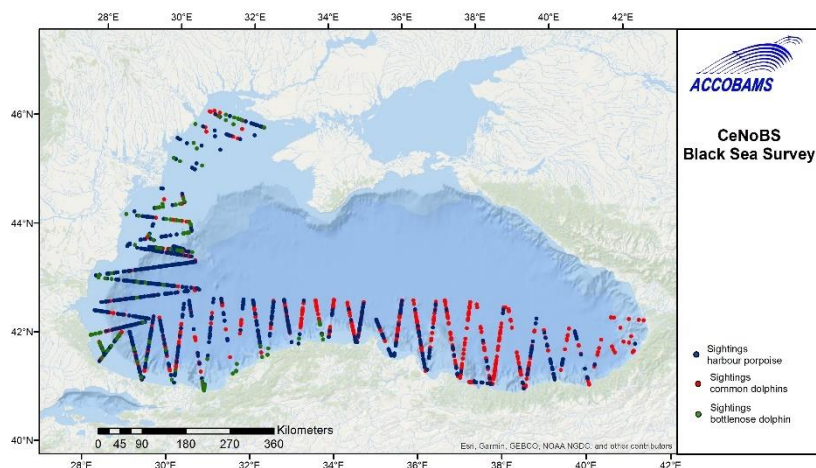


Figure 5. Preliminary results of cetaceans' observations – Aerial Survey in the Black Sea

In parallel, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat developed a collaboration with Russian Scientific Organizations in order to conduct a survey over part of the Russian waters. With the additional support of the EU-UNDP EMBLAS+ project and Russian stakeholders, this collaboration led to the successful implementation of the aerial survey in Russia in September 2019, following the same approach and methods than the ASI/CeNoBS surveys, in order to allow the comparison/merging of the two datasets.

4- EXPERIMENTATIONS ON UAVS USE FOR LARGE SCALE SURVEYS

The implementation of surveys of macro fauna remains a costly and challenging exercise, in particular at a large scale, and it is essential to explore the use of new techniques and instruments to facilitate future cetaceans monitoring at a wide variety of scale. Un-manned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) have been



Figure 6- Picture taken from a UAV - IMMRAC / University of Haifa

developed significantly during the past decades for various purposes, including environmental monitoring. They also represent a promising approach for surveying cetaceans and marine macro fauna in the near future, as they may require reduced fieldwork human effort and prove economical on the long run. Therefore, the ASI includes a specific activity to explore the possibilities linked with those new technologies.

Since late 2018, the IMMRAC/University of Haifa in collaboration with Murdoch University (Australia) are developing a 'Feasibility study and experimentation on the use of drones for Cetaceans monitoring in the ACCOBAMS Agreement area' whose results will be available at the end of 2019.

5- CAPACITY BUILDING

A key aspect of the ASI is its capacity-building component, which aims to ensure the competence of the observers involved in the ASI survey and to increase the countries' abilities to monitor cetaceans at the national level over the long run. In this view and considering the complementarity and synergies between the ASI and the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) of the UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan, ACCOBAMS and UNEP/MAP/SPA-RAC have developed a capacity building programme and carried out a series of training workshops on cetaceans monitoring technics and tools. These workshops have been designed taking into consideration the capacity building needs identified by each Riparian Country, in particular during the ASI Contact Group member Workshop organized in Tunis on 3-5 October 2017.

In 2018, in view of training the ASI observer teams, two regional workshops were conducted prior to the ASI survey: the first one allowed to train the ASI aerial survey observers and team leaders to the methodology, protocols and practice of aerial macro fauna survey (Cuers, France, 23-27 May 2018); the second workshop was dedicated to the team leaders of the countries/areas where aerial survey was not possible and marine vessels used instead (Samos, Greece, 18-22 June 2018). To complete the preparation of the teams, ASI observers who did not yet have aerial work safety training certification received dedicated training (Helicopter Under-water Escape Training).



Figure 7- Training session during the ASI aerial observer workshop, Cuers airport, France.



Figure 8 - ASI Workshop participants during a Photo ID practice at Sea, Montenegro

The ASI Capacity building programme continued to be implemented during the following year, in collaboration and with the support of the EcAp MED II project "*Mediterranean Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, in coherence with the European Union (EU) Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)*" and led to the

implementation of 4 sub-regional or national workshops in 2019.

All workshops organized in the context of the ASI are listed and detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1- Capacity building Workshops organized in the ASI and CeNoBS context

Title of the event	Content / Purpose	Date Location	Targeted countries
ASI Aerial observers Training Workshop	Training workshop to prepare all the aerial survey observers and Team leaders to conduct the ASI aerial survey in the Mediterranean	23-27 May 2018 Cuers, France	Mediterranean and Black Sea countries
HUET trainings for Aerial observers	Helicopter Underwater Escape Training – Basic safety training for aerial work	- Marseille- 29-30 May 2018 - Šibenik, Croatia – 15 may 2018 - Athens, Greece – May 2018 - Costanta, Romania May 8th 2018 - Pavia ,Italy, 4 April 2018	Mediterranean and Black Sea countries
ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative Boat survey Training Workshop	Training workshop to prepare the Team leaders to conduct the ASI boat based survey in the Mediterranean	18 th to 22 nd of June 2018, Samos Greece	Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Libya
The EcAp MED II/ ASI sub-regional training workshop on cetacean monitoring software	In French Distance sampling and Photo ID monitoring methods – software DISTANCE, MARK and SocProg	25-28 February 2019 - Bizerte, Tunisia	Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia
The ASI / EcAp MED II training workshop on monitoring techniques of cetaceans	Training on cetaceans biology, monitoring techniques and practice at sea (Photo ID)	15-18 April 2019 Monastir, Tunisia	Libya, Tunisia
The ASI/ EcAp MED II sub-regional training workshop on cetacean monitoring software	in English Distance sampling and Photo ID monitoring methods – softwares DISTANCE, MARK	24-27 of June 2019, Lebanon	Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey
The ASI / EcAp MED II on cetacean monitoring methods	in English Distance sampling and Photo ID monitoring methods – Practice at sea	16-20 of September 2019 - Kotor, Montenegro	Montenegro, Albania
CeNoBS Aerial survey observer training	Training workshop to prepare all the Aerial survey observers and Team leaders to conduct the ASI aerial Survey in the Black Sea	12-16 June 2019, Tulcea, Romania	Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Turkey

6-DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Following the validation of their proposal for the analysis of the ASI data by the ASI Steering Committee, the Scientific Coordinator and his team started the Data Analysis process in 2018. The regional analysis of the aerial and boat-based observation data are being conducted by the Scientific coordinator and a consultant expert, together with PELAGIS Observatory. In parallel, the analysis of the acoustic data is being conducted by Marine Conservation Research.

The global ASI Data Analysis validated approach proposes an optimal data analysis strategy for the data arising from the ASI that will provide (a) the most robust estimates possible for use in conservation and management; and (b) expand analytical capacity throughout the ACCOBAMS region.

Therefore, the analysis of the ASI data is done also through a participatory approach, reflecting the collaborative nature of the ASI project, and involves scientists from each country, strongly engaged in learning and applying analytical aspects. Three data analysis sub-regional workshops will be organized at the end of 2019 and in 2020, with both theoretical and practical sessions, during which participants will have the chance to individually prepare the data for abundance estimates, run the different models and present and discuss results with the trainers.

According to the planned timeframe, first results on cetacean distribution are presented on 4 November 2019 during an ASI Special event organized at the occasion of the Seventh Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS. A Final consolidated report, including the results of the 3 sub-regional workshops, should be available during the 3rd trimester 2020.

7-DATA MANAGEMENT

The ASI data are available for national purposes use, for example to fulfil reporting obligations like the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) of the Barcelona Convention, the Habitat Directive, etc. The ACCOBAMS National Focal Points can contact the Permanent Secretariat to request the data.

In addition, a study on Data and Information Management System for the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative has been finalized in 2018 (document ACCOBAMS-MOP7/2019/Inf12). Based on the results and recommendations of this study, a proposal on ASI data sharing policy and terms of use was developed by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat and the ASI Steering Committee, and circulated to the ACCOBAMS NFP and ASI Contact Group Members. The ASI data policy and Terms of Use can be consulted in the document ACCOBAMS-MOP7/2019/Inf13.

In accordance with this, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat has developed an online basic system on the ACCOBAMS Website to make part of the ASI data downloadable on line, upon filling a form and acceptance of the ASI Terms of Use. This tool will be operational from the 4th of November 2019. Until then, each data request received was circulated and review by the ASI Steering Committee. Table 2 summarizes all the requests for the ASI data reviewed and accepted so far.

Table 2-. Requests for the ASI data received by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in 2019

REQUEST HOLDER	SPECIES / OBJECT	TYPE OF DATA	INTENDED RESEARCH
St Andrews University, UK Jonathan Reid	Sperm whale	Acoustic data	MSc Thesis : Measuring body length of sperm whales (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>) in the Mediterranean from their clicks.
Centre d'Écologie Fonctionnelle et Évolutive /École Pratique des Hautes Études (CEFE/EPHE), France Gaëlle Darmon, Jeremy Mansui, Claude Miaud	Marine litter Sea turtles	Raw Boat and aerial	Risky areas of litter impacts for sea turtles at the Mediterranean basin level
McLaughlin Research Corporation Andrew DiMatteo	Sea turtles	Raw Boat and aerial	A loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>) spatial density model for the Mediterranean Sea derived from multiple survey platforms

European Topic Centre – University of Malaga (ETC-UMA), Spain Dania Abdul Malak	Marine litter, Cetaceans Sea turtles	Boat and aerial	Marine litter pressures in the Mediterranean Sea. <i>ASI data will be supporting the visualization and meta-analysis of status of the pressures of marine litter on Mediterranean marine biota</i>
University of Sienna, Italy Cristina Fossi	Marine litter Cetaceans other megafauna sp.	Boat and plane	Identification of Marine litter Hot spot areas and interaction with Biota (PlasticBusters MPAs Interreg –Med Project context)
Institute of Marine Science (ICM-CSIC), Spain Joan Giménez	Short-beaked common dolphin	Boat and aerial	Niche conservatism in cetaceans: common dolphins in European waters as a case study
Observatoire Pelagis, Université de La Rochelle, France Auriane Virgili / Vincent Ridoux	beaked whale sperm whale	Boat and plane	Processes underlying beaked whale and sperm whale hotspots to inform naval training planning in the aim to avoid interaction with impulse noise sources
Israel Marine Mammal Research and Assistance Center (IMMRAC) Dani Kerem	rough-toothed dolphin	Boat	To be mentioned in a chapter on rough-toothed dolphin in a forthcoming Springer book on the marine mammals of Europe
WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative Simone Niedermueller	Sharks and rays	Aerial	Evaluation of shark and ray occurrence data to inform WWF conservation strategy
Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET) Vicky Rae & Eleana Touloupaki	Sea turtles	Aerial	MAVA Funded: Increasing knowledge on the Sea Turtle population within the northern Aegean.
Open University, Germany Judith Matz – Student	marine litter	Boat	BSc course report on ‘Distribution of plastic pollution across the Mediterranean Sea’.

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat also received requests for part or all of the ASI DATA from the following countries, through their respective NFP: France, Slovenia, Spain and Tunisia. These requests were made in particular to fulfil reporting obligations like the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) of the Barcelona Convention or the Habitat Directive.

8-COMMUNICATION & AWARENESS

Given the large-scale, exceptional nature and the significant resources deployed by the ASI, there is an important communication component implemented all along the project. This is instrumental to raise awareness on the ASI, but also on the importance of conserving marine biodiversity at all kind of scale and by targeting a wide range of public. In this view, a communication strategy was created in the first place, followed by several communication support, actions, events and media coverage tools throughout the ASI project. The field campaigns in the summer of 2018 were particularly conducive to communication. Several short movies, leaflets, posters and writing material were developed, as well as website pages, news and continuous follow up on social media tools such as Facebook or Twitter.



Figure 9- Official visit during a stopover of the Song of the Whale, June 2018

In addition, the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat launched in 2018 a call for small communication actions to promote the project at the national level and to increase its visibility in the countries participating in the survey campaign, and more generally to raise awareness about cetacean conservation issues. Seven projects were selected in this context and implemented in 2018 and 2019 (Table 9).

Tableau 3- Small Communication Projects implemented during the ASI

PROJECT	ORGANISATION	PLACE AND YEAR	SUMMARY
"Giant Guardians of Deep Seas (GGDS)"	DMAD & WWF Turkey	Turkey, 2018	Dedicated workshops for students and academics on cetacean conservation and monitoring and "Interactive Photo-Identification and ArcGIS Mapping" and public awareness activities (press release, book development for children..)
Mediterranean Cetaceans In Our Schools	Blue World Institute,	Croatia, 2018	"Mediterranean Cetaceans" presentation by Blue World Institute's Education Team in elementary schools and media coverage
National Awareness Action In Tunisia	Centre National de Veille Zoosanitaire (CNVZ) & Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM)	Tunisia, 2018	Awareness Day the importance of monitoring and the conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans - targeting actors of the sea, including fishermen
I Know And Protect My Seas	METU, Turkey	Turkey, 2018	dedicated section on cetaceans included into existing marine environmental awareness programme entitled 'I Know and Protect my Seas' (DTK abbrev., https://www.facebook.com/denizimitaniyorum).
Dolphin Day & Dolphin Night	MORIGENOS, Slovenia	Slovenia, 2018	Actions are carried out as a combination of public events and a rotating educational exhibition.
Spotlight On Mediterranean Cetaceans	Institut Marin du Seaquarium	France, 2018	Photo contest and public lecture
Awareness on the ASI in Morocco	Groupe scolaire OSUI Jacques Majorelle	Morocco, 2019	ASI exhibition in School and French Institutes Radio coverage on radio Medi1 Preparation and broadcast of a radio show on Marine conservation, Cetceans conservation and monitoring and the ASI by high school students

To ensure the best visibility to the project and inform the conservation community, presentations of the ASI and its preliminary results were made during several regional relevant meetings, conferences and events between 2017 and 2019 (see Table 4).

Table 4 - List of meetings, conferences and fora during which the ASI was presented

EVENT	PLACE AND DATE	TYPE OF COMMUNICATION
31 st European Cetacean Society Annual Conference -	Middelfart, Denmark, Sunday 30th April 2017	Presentation of the ASI during the Workshop “Inputs to the ACCOBAMS ongoing effort to map human threats on cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Black Seas”
The fourth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC4)	La Serena – Coquimbo, Chile, from 4-8 September 2017	Presentation of the ASI during a workshop on marine megafauna
ACCOBAMS Fourth Biennial Conference (CSMC4)	Oran, Algeria, 11-13 November 2017	Poster on the ASI
14 th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity	Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 17-29 November 2018	Presentation of the ASI by the ACCOBAMS Chair during the Side Event “How MMPAs and networks of MMPAs can contribute towards Aichi Target 11. A set of tools shared at the national, regional and international levels.”
3 rd Meeting of the Signatories to the Sharks MOU	Monaco, 10-14 December 2018	Side event on ASI preliminary results “The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative :An Unprecedented Macro-Regional Marine Fauna Survey of the Mediterranean’
GFCM Forum on Fisheries Science in the Mediterranean and Black Sea	Rome, Italy, 10-14 December 2018	ASI preliminary results presentation during an ACCOBAMS Side Event Exhibition on the ASI
UNEP/MAP - Meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Biodiversity and Fisheries	Marseille, France, 12-13 February 2019	Presentation of the ASI preliminary Results
European Commission Joint Research Centre Floating Marine Macro Litter workshop	Rome Italy, 14-15. February 2019,	Presentation of preliminary results of the ASI on Marine floating litter
EMBLAS-Plus Inception Workshop	Istanbul, Turkey 21-22 Feb 2019,	Presentation of the CeNOBS project and the Black Sea survey
10 th edition of the Monaco Blue Initiative -	Monaco, 24 -25 March 2019	Conference on the ASI
5 th International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas - Messina, ICMMPA5	Messinia, Greece, April 8–12, 2019	Half day Workshop “The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI): lessons learnt and future plans
MARLICE 2019 International Forum on Marine Litter and Circular Economy,	Seville, Spain 10-12th April 2019	Presentation of the ASI during a panel discussion at PANACeA open session
MEDSEALITTER Final Event International conference and workshop Roma, Italy, June 11-12, 2019	Rome, Italy, June 11 2019	Presentation of the ASI and preliminary results on floating Marine litter
MEDPOL – Regional Meeting on Marine Litter Best Practices	(Izmir, Turkey, 9-10 October 2018)	Presentation on ACCOBAMS activities related to marine litter, including the ASI data collection on marine floating debris
MAVA OAPs M4 and M5 regional meeting,	Porto Cesareo , Italy, 2-4 July 201	Presentation on the ASI and preliminary results
42 nd Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM) Congress	Cascais, Portugal 7-11 October 2019	Poster on the ASI preliminary results

9- SUSTAINABILITY ASPECTS

In order to assess trends in population status that will inform decision makers and support relevant conservation measures, monitoring efforts must be replicated systematically and regularly over time, as reflected in the 6-year cycle of marine monitoring regional policies of the region (i.e. MFSD, EcAp). While the ASI 2018 and 2019 surveys provided a strong baseline for regional monitoring, it remains crucial to address the sustainability issue of harmonized monitoring operations to estimate abundance and distribution of cetacean populations in the Agreement Area.

The ASI therefore shall not remain a single effort and there is a need to explore and assess different ways to ensure monitoring continuity in the ACCOBAMS Area. In this regard, a key aspect of the ASI project addressing the sustainability of its actions, consists in assessing the feasibility of (a) mechanism(s) for ensuring regular and long-term monitoring of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area. A call for proposals was therefore launched to recruit an expert in Sept 2019 to conduct a study on ‘Developing proposals for long-term funding mechanism(s) for periodical large-scale cetacean monitoring in the ACCOBAMS Area’.