

DRAFT RESOLUTION 8.11
THE ACCOBAMS LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAMME

The Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area:

Recalling Article II, paragraph 3, of the Agreement and its Annex 2 (Conservation Plan), paragraph 2,

Recalling Resolution 2.11 on the facilitation of scientific research campaigns and programmes,

Recalling Resolution 5.1 on the ACCOBAMS Strategy for the period 2014-2025, in particular its specific objective B.1 “Improve the knowledge about state of cetaceans”,

Recalling Resolution 6.13 on Comprehensive cetacean population estimates and distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area (Monitoring of cetacean distribution, abundance and ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative), which has replaced previous Resolutions 2.19, 3.15 and 5.9,

Recalling Resolution 7.10 on Improving monitoring and assessment of cetacean population abundance and distribution in the ACCOBAMS area, which recommended the development of a suitable monitoring programme for the ACCOBAMS region to enable abundance trends and potential distributional changes to be identified, consistently with the reporting cycles of European Union Habitats Directive, European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and IMAP (Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and coast and related Assessment Criteria) of the Barcelona Convention,

Taking into consideration Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP),

Taking into consideration the Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Group established to provide guidance on financial aspects related to the ACCOBAMS LTMP,

Considering that the LTMP is not only fundamental to the ability of the Parties to meet the stated objectives of ACCOBAMS, but will also assist individual Parties to meet relevant national and international commitments, which include the objectives of the Barcelona Convention Ecosystem Approach/Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (EcAp/IMAP) and the Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea (IG25/13), the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the European Union Habitats Directive, the Black Sea integrated monitoring and assessment programme,

Welcoming strongly the realization of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative in the Agreement Area and *commending* the Parties, the non-Party Range States, the Secretariat, the sub-regional Co-ordination Units, the Scientific Committee, all partner organizations and all persons involved for the successful implementation of the survey campaigns in summer 2018 and 2019 in the Mediterranean Sea and in the Black Sea,

Expressing its gratitude to France, Italy, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, the MAVA Foundation, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for their voluntary contributions and financial support, and to other Parties that have provided in-kind contributions for the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative in the Mediterranean Sea,

Acknowledging the financial support provided by the European Commission to the project 'CeNoBS' - Support MSFD implementation in the Black Sea through establishing a regional monitoring system of cetaceans (Descriptor 1, biological diversity) and noise monitoring (Descriptor 11, noise and energy) for achieving Good Environmental Status (GES), which supports the implementation of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative in the Black Sea,

Thanking also the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature - Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med), the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB), the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) and the PELAGIS Observatory for their participation in the Steering Committee of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative project,

Recognizing the success of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and 'CeNoBS' projects in providing baseline abundance summer estimates for cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS region that contributed to the assessment of IUCN conservation status for cetacean species in the region and to the publication "Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and adjacent areas: an ACCOBAMS Status Report 2021",

Recognizing the significant value of the ASI dataset for the preparation of the Mediterranean Quality Status Report,

Stressing the need to explore new and alternative sources of data to assess cetaceans' distribution and abundance, in particular through the use of existing marine monitoring programmes and innovative technologies,

I. ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme

1. *Endorses* and fully *commits* to facilitate the implementation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP reflected in the Annex which focuses primarily upon obtaining robust estimates of cetacean abundance and distribution and identifying respective changes over time, as well as other megafauna and human activities, in the context of providing advice on the achievement of conservation and management objectives;
2. *Asks* the Secretariat, in co-operation with the Scientific Committee, to review, consolidate and update the LTMP overview document at regular intervals;
3. *Urges* the Parties and the Secretariat, given the fundamental importance of the LTMP, to secure funding for its implementation by combining a minimum of 40 % of internal funding and the rest from external funding;
4. *Invites* the Parties to provide voluntary contributions in 2023 so to meet the expected internal funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the Mediterranean and Black Seas in 2024-2025;
5. *Mandates* the Secretariat to undertake fundraising efforts so to meet the expected external funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the Mediterranean and Black Seas in 2024-2025,
6. *Strongly encourages* the Parties to commit to providing in-kind support for the next synoptic basin-wide surveys in the Mediterranean and Black Seas in 2024-2025, and implementation of the whole programme cycle 2023-2027;

7. *Mandates* the Secretariat to evaluate the feasibility of innovative targeted funding mechanisms to sustain the ACCOBAMS LTMP in line with the ACCOBAMS Funding Strategy adopted through Resolution 7.5 and to elaborate specific strategies and operational guidelines for their implementation, as well as to approach targeted donors in view to secure the LTMP budget in the nearest future;
8. *Invites* the ACCOBAMS Parties and range States to appoint a national contact person to participate in a LTMP Contact Group to define implementation conditions and protocol for logistics (research platform, human means, equipment, training, etc.) and administration (survey restrictions, permits, etc.) related to undertaking basin-wide synoptic surveys based upon the experience gained from ASI1, taking into account the guidance provided in Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee;
9. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to review, and update as necessary, the field and analytical protocols for basin-wide cetacean surveys, also including selected marine megafauna and human activity data, and to consider new developments of technology, survey design and methods to analyse data in accordance with guidance provided in Recommendation 14.1;
10. *Asks* the Parties and the Secretariat, in conjunction with the Scientific Committee, given the huge long-term value of the ASI dataset and future data collected under the LTMP and the importance of properly archiving this data and making its availability widespread for the benefit of the conservation science community:
 - (a) to work to optimize data archiving and sharing, including ensuring the interoperability of ASI data sets with other relevant databases, such as NETCCOBAMS, EMODnet, IMAP Info System, OBIS-SEAMAP and organisations for data exchange;
 - (b) to ensure that the protocol for obtaining access to the ASI and future data includes a component that states that the outputs of any analyses using ASI and future data are made available to ACCOBAMS, with appropriate publication safeguards, so that:
 - the outputs can be used by the Scientific Committee to contribute to its ability to give the best scientific advice, and
 - the Secretariat can monitor the use and influence of the knowledge base to assist in illustrating the broader value of the ASI and to assist in improving the undertaking and data collection on future surveys as part of the ACCOBAMS LTMP;
 - (c) to work in identifying ways to foster co-operation and partnerships between experts throughout the Agreement's range, including by:
 - increasing the visibility of ASI datasets, future datasets and related results, encouraging the widest use possible of existing analyses to contribute towards decision making on conservation matters, as well as encouraging further analyses of ASI and future data to meet conservation and management needs at cetacean and ecosystem levels;
 - providing sufficient resources to make best use of ASI data throughout the ACCOBAMS area, including through financial support for mentorship schemes, training and joint publications.

II – Improving cetaceans' distribution and abundance monitoring efforts in the Agreement area

11. *Recommends* that Parties and Range States ensure that any proposed national programmes on the study of abundance and distribution of cetaceans are compatible with the guidelines annexed to Resolution 6.13;

12. *Recommends* that Parties ensure that the relevant authorities share plans for their long-term national and sub-regional cetacean monitoring programmes, including ongoing activities under the European Union Habitats Directive, European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive, EcAp/IMAP and other programs such as Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea;
13. *Asks* the Scientific Committee and the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to assist in identifying synergies and potential collaborations in existing or proposed programmes;
14. *Recommends* that Parties, Range States and ACCOBAMS Partners, where relevant, coordinate the implementation of national monitoring programmes, in particular by synchronizing their survey campaigns, and consider joint survey efforts, whenever possible, assisted by the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat;
15. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to advise on methods and protocols for smaller-scale regional and national existing and new programmes for the monitoring of abundance, distribution and trends, in light of information that will be received from periodic basin-wide summer synoptic surveys;
16. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to work as expeditiously as possible with relevant modelling experts in order to develop a simulation framework to examine the ability of different survey strategies, including frequency and geographical extent, to obtain robust abundance estimates, to detect trends in abundance and distribution and to determine whether ACCOBAMS conservation objectives are being met, mindful that the same framework should be used to examine how and where vessels of opportunity and multidisciplinary surveys can contribute to the LTMP;
17. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to assist in the following:
 - (a) investigating the use of vessels of opportunity and multidisciplinary cruises, as well as dedicated surveys, to provide information on:
 - areas that may not be able to be surveyed in basin-wide surveys and for which few data on presence or absence are available;
 - non-summer occurrence;
 - local trends in abundance and distribution; and
 - areas where those platforms are already used for the collection of data on cetaceans and their habitat components;
 - (b) undertaking pilot studies when new techniques or vessels of opportunity are considered; and
 - (c) further considering the use of passive and active acoustic monitoring for specific areas and species, such as sperm and Cuvier's beaked whales, in line with the ongoing monitoring plans, such as those under the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive and EcAp/IMAP, including the Eastern Basin.
18. *Decides* that the present Resolution complements Resolution 6.13 and replaces Resolution 7.10.

ANNEX

**ACCOBAMS LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAMME FOR ESTIMATING TRENDS
IN ABUNDANCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF CETACEANS**

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Background

The main objective of ACCOBAMS being to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area, the Agreement requests the Contracting Parties to undertake, individually and through collaboration, a series of conservation and management measures for the species and to develop cooperation for research and monitoring to fully implement them. The development of monitoring is clearly designated by the Agreement among the most recommended ways to enhance the knowledge about the biology, ecology, and population dynamics of cetaceans in order to identify and implement conservation measures.

In accordance with the ACCOBAMS strategic objective on improving the understanding of the conservation status of cetaceans at the Mediterranean/Black Sea macroregional level, the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) Project¹, a collaborative initiative aimed at establishing an integrated and coordinated monitoring system for cetaceans, was launched in 2016 during the Sixth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (Monaco, 22-25 November 2016).

After the successful implementation in 2018/2019 of the surveys over the Mediterranean Sea within the framework of the ASI Project, a survey in a large part of the Black Sea was conducted during the summer of 2019 through the CeNoBS² and EMBLAS-Plus³ Projects.

Building on the experience gained so far through the development and the implementation of the ASI, the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS initiated the elaboration of the ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Programme (ACCOBAMS LTMP) for estimating abundance and distribution of cetaceans and assessing trends in space and time.

Objectives of the ACCOBAMS LTMP

The primary motivation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP is to collect reliable data allowing to obtain accurate estimates of abundance and distribution of cetacean species in the ACCOBAMS Area. It [should] [may] also collect information on human activities at sea that could generate threats to cetacean (maritime traffic, leisure boating, fishing, marine litter, Chemical pollutants, etc.). This information may be used to identify hotspot zones of interaction between cetaceans and human activities in the ACCOBAMS area. The ultimate objective being to provide a robust scientific base for the setting and the regular adjustment of conservation and management measures that allow achieving a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Agreement area. Through such an achievement, Parties will fulfil their obligations under ACCOBAMS, as well as their commitments towards other relevant Multilateral Agreements (CBD, CMS, Barcelona Convention, EU regulations, etc.).

The periodic implementation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP will allow to assess trends in species population size and distribution, and, also using information on human activities impacting cetaceans, to assess, and where necessary adapt, the conservation measures in place. The data collected by the ASI in the Mediterranean and Black Seas established a reliable baseline from which to measure future changes in the monitored parameters.

¹ The ASI Project benefited, for its Mediterranean component, from the financial support of France, Italy, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, the MAVA Foundation, the Prince Albert II Foundation and IFAW.

² 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" was implemented between 2018-2021 thanks to a financial support of the European Union (<https://www.cenobs.eu/>)

³ The EMBLAS-Plus project "Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – Selected Measures" (<http://emblasproject.org/>) is funded by the European Union.

The geographical scope of the ACCOBAMS LTMP

Given the mobile nature of cetacean species, the ACCOBAMS LTMP should cover the whole "Agreement area" as defined in Article I of the ACCOBAMS Agreement⁴. This implies that it will cover within the Agreement area (i) the maritime waters under the jurisdiction of the Parties, (ii) the maritime waters of the non-Party States and (iii) the maritime waters located beyond national jurisdictions. Furthermore, it may also cover other maritime zones that could be included in the future in the Agreement area, such as the maritime zones of Portugal and Spain whose inclusion in the Agreement area was adopted by the Parties through Resolution A/4.1 amending the geographic scope of the Agreement, pending the entry into force of the amendment.

However, under certain circumstances it may not be possible to conduct monitoring surveys covering areas where administrative (permit-related) or political constraints do not allow monitoring teams to operate normally and safely.

Furthermore, the geographical coverage of the monitoring may also depend on the availability of financial resources. Therefore, a synoptic survey may be limited to cover only part of the areas targeted by the ACCOBAMS LTMP. However, a maximum possible coverage should be aimed for.

Monitoring approach

The ACCOBAMS LTMP will be mainly based on periodic synoptic surveys covering the entire Agreement area. Each survey shall be a collaborative initiative involving all the ACCOBAMS Parties through their relevant national administrations, researchers and NGOs. It will be coordinated by the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS⁵ and implemented by national teams supported, where necessary and appropriate, by observers and/or cruise team leaders designated by the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS in consultation with the relevant Focal Points and based on their scientific expertise.

The Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS shall contribute to all phases of the ACCOBAMS LTMP by providing its advice to the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat on the scientific and technical matters, in particular in relation to the planning, development, implementation and assessment of synoptic surveys and other relevant monitoring activities.

Conducting the synoptic surveys of the ACCOBAMS LTMP according to a six-year frequency would provide the right balance between monitoring cost and regular updating of information on abundance and distribution of cetacean species in the ACCOBAMS area. Ensuring such a frequency will be, however, a crucial challenge given the financial resources required for such monitoring effort.

For each synoptic survey, the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS will collaborate closely with the ACCOBAMS National Focal Points and a Contact Group whose members are designated by the National Focal Points. As demonstrated during the implementation of the ASI Project in 2018, the role of the Contact Group members is important, in particular for liaising with the relevant national authorities, ensuring the following-up at national level of the authorization request

⁴ the "Agreement area", is constituted by all the maritime waters of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and their gulfs and seas, and the internal waters connected to or interconnecting these maritime waters, and of the Atlantic area contiguous to the Mediterranean Sea west of the Straits of Gibraltar. For the purpose of this Agreement:

- the Black Sea is bounded to the southwest by the line joining Capes Kelaga and Dalyan (Türkiye);
- the Mediterranean Sea is bounded to the east by the southern limits of the Straits of the Dardanelles between the lighthouses of Mehmetcik and Kumkale (Türkiye) and to the west by the meridian passing through Cape Spartel lighthouse, at the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar; and
- the contiguous Atlantic area west of the Strait of Gibraltar is bounded to the east by the meridian passing through Cape Spartel lighthouse and to the west by the line joining the lighthouses of Cape St. Vicente (Portugal) and Casablanca (Morocco).

⁵ Where needed, the coordination may be delegated to a partner organisation.

processes for aerial and/or boat surveys and to provide support with logistical aspects during the survey implementation phase. In order to support the coordination at national level of the synoptic survey, the Secretariat, upon request by the National Focal Point, shall inform the relevant National Authorities of the country, such as the Foreign Affairs Services, about the synoptic survey and provide them with information on the general framework of the initiative and its expected results. The ACCOBAMS Parties and other involved countries shall facilitate the implementation of the surveys in their waters and where possible provide their support in relation to the necessary logistic requirements.

A Scientific Coordinator will assist the Secretariat in the development and implementation phases of the synoptic surveys, in liaison with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

The Parties to ACCOBAMS and the non-Party States are encouraged to adhere to the ACCOBAMS LTMP and to ensure the maximum level of harmonisation between their “routine” cetacean monitoring activities in the ACCOBAMS area and the ACCOBAMS LTMP. In this context, given that several countries regularly conduct monitoring campaigns to assess the cetacean populations in their national waters included in the ACCOBAMS Area, it would be useful that the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, with the support of the Bureau, liaises with the relevant authorities in these countries and invite them to synchronize the realization of their cetacean monitoring campaigns with the surveys under the ACCOBAMS LTMP and to ensure a high level of harmonisation of the surveying protocols. This will allow a better use of the available resources and means to ensure the evaluation of the cetacean population status in the whole Agreement area.

Programmes aimed at monitoring parameters other than those covered by the ACCOBAMS LTMP (e.g. cetacean stranding monitoring programmes, long-term passive acoustic monitoring, monitoring of bycatch, etc.) should be encouraged since they provide additional data that complement the information gathered under the ACCOBAMS LTMP and are a crucial component to the conservation of cetaceans.

Monitoring protocols and platforms

The ACCOBAMS LTMP will use the multispecies monitoring protocols developed and used for the surveys carried out within the framework of the ASI Project in 2018⁶ and 2019, during which the aerial surveys, using appropriate airplanes and skilled and/or trained observers, enabled to collect data for obtaining robust estimates of density and abundance for most cetacean species in the Agreement Area. The synoptic surveys of the ACCOBAMS LTMP will be mainly based on aerial surveys. However, shipboard surveys shall be used for species requiring passive acoustic monitoring techniques and/or in areas where flying permits cannot be obtained.

During the whole process of data collection and processing, special attention should be paid to ensure data quality. The parameters to be considered by the ACCOBAMS LTMP are those needed to estimate abundance and distribution of different cetacean populations in the Agreement Area and to provide information on human activities impacting them.

Periodic surveys of the ACCOBAMS LTMP shall be implemented during the same season⁷ to ensure data comparability between surveys from different years. Their data will not inform therefore on the seasonal distribution of the species. This kind of information could be generated by other monitoring programmes undertaken at different temporal planning and smaller spatial scales or using opportunistic platforms (ferries, fishing boats, etc.).

⁶ Links to the field protocols for aerial surveys and boat-based surveys developed and used by the ASI Project to be added

⁷ The surveys shall be conducted preferably in summer season and their timing will take into account the weather specificities of each region.

To take advantage of possible future technological and/or methodological advances in the monitoring of cetaceans, the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee will closely follow up the development in cetacean monitoring techniques in order to propose adaptations and/or improvements to the monitoring protocols under the ACCOBAMS LTMP.

Monitoring targets

The ACCOBAMS LTMP will primarily target cetacean species and threats having a direct impact on them. However, to maximize the benefit from involved surveying effort, observation data relating to other species of megafauna and/or other threatened species may be collected, if observation teams are sufficiently skilled to ensure data quality, particularly with regard to the identification of observed species. The following taxa could be covered, in addition to cetaceans: turtles, monk seal, large fish, including elasmobranch, species and birds.

The ACCOBAMS LTMP should also provide the framework for the collection of information about the presence, during the monitoring transects, if relevant, of commercial ships, fishing boats, aquaculture farms, leisure boats, acoustic survey ships, oil slicks, marine litter and any other elements related to human activities that may threaten cetaceans. The collection of data concerning these human activities should allow the identification of areas where there is a high risk of adverse interactions with cetaceans, for example via spatial modelling approaches.

Data management and use

The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS is the depository of the data sets collected under the ACCOBAMS LTMP. Each Focal Point may receive, upon request, a copy of the data sets collected.

ACCOBAMS being an Intergovernmental Agreement aimed at promoting conservation of cetaceans, it therefore appears appropriate and advisable that data collected under the ACCOBAMS LTMP be made available for the widest possible use for conservation related purposes. Therefore, raw data generated by the ACCOBAMS LTMP may be made available, upon request, to scientists and partner organisations for use in conservation related purposes. Their dissemination and use in scientific publications and awareness-raising material shall be subject to Terms of Use that take into account the ACCOBAMS objectives and possible requirements by Parties and donors. The Terms of Use will be available on the website of ACCOBAMS.

For each synoptic survey, the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS shall establish a data analysis process in close consultation with the Scientific Coordinator. The data analysis will be conducted *a minima* by one skilled expert with the review/guidance of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee. If funding allows, the analysis process may be conducted by a team made of an ad hoc group of experts and other skilled scientists that Parties might designate to contribute in the data analysis.

The expert / the data analysis team shall produce a report rendering the outcomes of its/their works, focusing on cetacean abundance and distribution estimates, as well as on trends when possible. The report shall be reviewed by the Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS and published by the Secretariat.

At the ACCOBAMS level, the ultimate use of outcomes from synoptic surveys will be mainly for the development of conservation recommendations elaborated by the Scientific Committee that will serve as a basis of draft Resolutions prepared by the Secretariat and reviewed by the Extended Bureau with the view of submitting them to the Parties for consideration. The outcomes of surveys conducted under the ACCOBAMS LTMP may also help in the decision-

making process in relation to conservation at national level and within the framework of other multilateral agreements concerned by the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

Skills availability/Capacity building

The accuracy and reliability of data collected within the framework of the ACCOBAMS LTMP will largely depend on the availability of skilled and/or trained observers able to identify target species and to properly apply monitoring protocols. As part of the ASI project, training sessions were organized for observers to familiarize with the monitoring protocols and to train in safety procedures to be followed where necessary. These sessions made it possible to train several observers from countries of the ACCOBAMS area who had also the opportunity to improve their monitoring skills during surveys carried out in 2018 and 2019. The future implementation of the LTMP can therefore count on these skills. However, considering that some trained observers would no longer be available for future periodic surveys, the Secretariat should ensure for each monitoring survey under the ACCOBAMS LTMP the availability of qualified observers and cruise/team leaders⁸. To this end, the LTMP should include a training component targeting all actors of the field surveys (observers, team leaders, etc.) allowing the newly involved participants to qualify for their tasks and the skilled ones to brush up their skills and familiarise with new methodological updates. The trainings should include, in addition to issues directly related to data collection, other relevant aspects covering safety, logistics, administrative procedures, etc.

Funding

The financial needs for the implementation of the ACCOBAMS LTMP are relatively high, which requires a particular effort to mobilize necessary funds. Furthermore, the effective implementation of such a long-term monitoring programme will require that assistance be provided, in a spirit of solidarity, to some Range States for capacity building and to contribute in covering their field surveying costs under the ACCOBAMS LTMP.

It is therefore important to establish a long-term mechanism for financing programme actions that ensures the sustainability of the programme and contributes to rationalizing available resources from donors and national authorities.

The Secretariat in close collaboration with the Bureau of ACCOBAMS will investigate funding options and will liaise with possible donors, as well as with relevant national authorities and relevant multilateral organisations with the view of securing the needed funds for the synoptic surveys.

Links with relevant initiatives

Cetacean monitoring programmes aimed at evaluating populations and their distribution in the ACCOBAMS area are implemented within the framework of several initiatives at national and also multilateral level.

At national level, member countries of the European Union need to regularly undertake cetacean monitoring programs to collect the information required for their reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive as well as

⁸ Given the crucial role of cruise leaders in planning and conducting surveys as well as in overcoming difficulties faced during the different survey stages, their appointment is among the issues demanding a special attention.

in relation to the assessment of the Environmental Status under Descriptor 1 (Biodiversity) of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

In the Mediterranean, other cetacean monitoring programmes are expected within the framework of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) of the EcAp process under the Barcelona Convention. A similar initiative is also expected for the Black Sea within the framework of the Bucharest Convention. Most of these monitoring programmes have similarities with the ACCOBAMS LTMP, in terms of monitoring targets and protocols. The estimates on abundance and distribution of cetacean species that will be generated on a regular basis by the ACCOBAMS LTMP will constitute very useful data to report on favourable Conservation Status under the EU Habitats Directive and to assess Good Environmental Status (GES), both under EU MSFD and IMAP of Barcelona Convention's EcAp process.