

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 macroregional level, the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) Project²⁰, 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 and Contiguous Atlantic Area 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 CeNoBS²¹ and EMBLAS-Plus²² 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 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 ACCOBAMS Area established a reliable baseline from which to measure future changes in the monitored parameters.

²⁰ The ASI Project benefited, for its Mediterranean and Contiguous Atlantic Area component, from the financial support of France, Italy, Monaco, Slovenia, Spain, the MAVA Foundation, the Prince Albert II Foundation and IFAW.

²¹ 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/>).

²² The EMBLAS-Plus project "Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – Selected Measures" (<http://emblasproject.org/>) is funded by the European Union.

