

STATE OF PLAY OF THE ASI2 PROJECT

Issue : ASI2 Project - assessment of distribution and abundance of cetacean populations

1. Action requested

The Scientific Committee is invited to:

- a. **consider** the state of play of ASI 2 project
- b. **acknowledge** the BU16 decisions and the LTMP Contact Group conclusions
- c. **discuss** and **agree** next steps of the Scientific Committee

2. Background

2.1. Through Resolution 8.10 on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme, in [Annex 1](#), Parties committed to facilitate the implementation of regular basin-wide synoptic surveys, by endorsing recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee, so to ensure a systematic monitoring of the distribution and abundance of cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS Area.

In ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.10, Parties requested *“the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, to prepare, for the next basin wide survey, a detailed technical document in the form of a **project proposal**, with a description of the different work packages, time-frame, budget and a SWOT analysis”*.

2.2. On the other hand, in ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.10, **Parties were invited to:**

- *“provide voluntary contributions in 2023 so to meet the expected internal funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026”* (para. 5)

- *“to commit to providing in-kind support for the next synoptic basin-wide surveys”* (para. 7);

- *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”*.

3. Implementation of ASI2 project

3.1. The ASI2 project

The project proposal requested by the Parties – consisting of a **detailed technical document** comprehending different work packages, time frame, budget and SWOT analysis, reflected in [Annex 2](#) to this document – was drafted by the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, and further revised by the SC15 before being circulated to all Parties on 5/10/2023, through their National Focal Points, with a request to officially indicate the following, prior to 31/12/2023:

- Which voluntary contributions and/or in-kind support Parties would be ready to allocate to the implementation of the ASI2 project, and, indicatively, for the following surveys, as foreseen in the Long-Term Monitoring Programme adopted in Resolution 8.10;
- a national representative for the LTMP Contact Group.

3.2. The LTMP contact group discussions on the funding of ASI2

Responses from countries would enable building up a clearer idea, including for launching fundraising efforts of the Secretariat to approach possible donors.

The LTMP Contact Group met three times in 2024 in order to provide information from their countries in respect of foreseen contributions (in cash or in kind), necessary to have clarity on existing financial means. Such assessment is required in Resolution 8.10 because it is indispensable to determine the **date of start and ending of the project**, as well as for the launching phase of the ASI2 project, as reflected in the corresponding timeline in the Project Proposal dated September 2023.

The preparatory stage to launch ASI 2 project was expected to be concluded during the first half of 2024, in order to recruit a scientific team, composed of a scientific coordinator and a project officer, who would be ready to work during the second half of 2024, in particular on a common methodology to launch the project beginning 2025.

In face of the insufficient visibility on funding from the Parties, including on when financial means would become available, the last meeting of the LTMP Contact Group, on 18th June 2024, concluded that:

- the starting date of **ASI2 should be postponed to 2026**, to give time to:
 - pursue the efforts of Countries and the Secretariat in seeking the necessary funding for launching the project;
 - have the necessary funds to recruit the coordination personnel at the Secretariat, as well as the Scientific coordinator, in accordance with point VI of the Project (Project Governance): “*full-time Project manager, full-time administrative assistant and the Scientific coordinator*”;
 - use the *momentum* of the political context of the 2025 UNOC to increase visibility of ASI2 project.
- there was an **urgent need** to recruit a full-time ASI2 Project manager and a full-time administrative assistant in the Secretariat, as well as the Scientific Coordinator.
- the Scientific Committee and other relevant experts **should be consulted** on the need to adapt the current ASI2 project, including the survey design, bearing in mind new and environmentally-friendly technologies and the need to reduce costs.

3.3. The 16th Bureau Meeting

Following the last LTMP Contact Group meeting, on the morning of 18 June 2024, the Bureau met in the afternoon of the same day in order **to assess the preparatory stage** preceding the launching of ASI2 Project, and **to take a decision**, in accordance with article 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Bureau. The full report of the BU16 is reflected in [BU16/2024/Doc04](#).

Bureau members considered the summary of the announced financial allocations during LTMP contact group meetings were reflected in ACCOBAMS-BU16/2024/Inf02. The Secretariat did not receive official letters confirming voluntary contributions or in-kind contributions. Due to the lack of visibility on funds that are, may, or will be, allocated to the ASI2 project, **the progression** of the project preparatory activities, as planned for the second half of 2024, **was interrupted**.

Bureau Members also pointed out

- either to keep the ASI2 project as such, until the funding phase would enable further clarity on the project start and end dates; or to envisage a possible adaptation of its timeline, methodology and geographical coverage.
- given the importance of ASI2 project as a basin-wide survey across the ACCOBAMS Area, adjusting its geographical coverage should only be envisaged for areas where the survey could not be conducted due to political context or to the lack of survey permits.
- because of the migratory nature of cetacean species and the changes in the marine environment from one year to the other, it was indispensable to have survey data from the same region and year, in order to avoid biased results.

Based on the current preparatory stage aiming at launching ASI2, the **Bureau concluded that**

1. Noting the current circumstances, the initial timeline of the project needs to be updated, notably for the ASI2 fieldwork.
2. To start the project as soon as possible in order to plan ASI2 first fieldwork in 2026, and meanwhile allow time to:
 - pursue the efforts of Countries and the Secretariat in seeking the necessary funding for launching the project;
 - have the necessary funds to recruit the coordination personnel at the Secretariat and the Scientific coordinator, in accordance with point VI of the project (Project Governance): “*full-time Project manager, full-time administrative assistant and the Scientific coordinator*”;
 - use the *momentum* of the political context of the 2025 UNOC to increase visibility of ASI2 project.
3. Subject to bilateral agreements with donor countries, seek the possibility to use funds from any contributions received in 2024 for engaging a scientific team to adapt the project methodologies, considering appropriate environmentally-friendly technologies, and survey design in consultation with the Scientific Committee.

ANNEX 1
RESOLUTION 8.10
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 relevant reporting cycles of European Union legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, 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 relevant legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, 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, Contiguous Atlantic Area 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,

Expressing its gratitude to the European Commission for financing 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 Barcelona Convention Mediterranean Quality Status Report, in particular in regards to quantitative results on the distribution and abundance of cetaceans, other marine megafauna species and floating marine litter,

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* the Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme as annexed to the Report of the 14th Meeting of ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (ACCOBAMS-SC14/2021/Doc40);
2. *Invites* Parties 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;
3. *Tasks* the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, to prepare, for the next synoptic basin wide survey, a detailed technical document in the form of a project proposal, with a description of the different work packages, time-frame, budget and a SWOT analysis;
4. *Urges* the Parties and the Secretariat, given the fundamental importance of the LTMP, to secure funding for its implementation, taking into consideration, as appropriate, the recommendations of the ACCOBAMS *ad hoc* Group LTMP (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/27);

5. *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 ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026;
6. *Mandates* the Secretariat to undertake fundraising efforts so to meet the expected external funding in view of undertaking synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026;
7. *Strongly encourages* the Parties to commit to providing in-kind support for the next synoptic basin-wide surveys in the ACCOBAMS Area in 2024-2026, and implementation of the whole programme cycle 2023-2027;
8. *Asks* the Secretariat to explore funding opportunities within the framework of the EU relevant financial mechanisms, inter alia European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), LIFE and Interreg programmes;
9. *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;
10. *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;
11. *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;
12. *Asks* 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;

13. *Invites* Parties to foster, with the support of the Secretariat, co-operation and partnerships between experts throughout the Agreement's range, including by:
- a. 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;
 - b. 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

14. *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;
15. *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 relevant legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, EcAp/IMAP and other programs such as Action Plan for the Conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea;
16. *Asks* the Scientific Committee and the Sub-Regional Coordination Units to assist in identifying synergies and potential collaborations in existing or proposed programmes;
17. *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;
18. *Asks* the Scientific Committee to advice 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;
19. *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;
20. *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 relevant legal frameworks, inter alia the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives and EcAp/IMAP, including the Eastern Basin.

21. *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 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 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 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 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.).

¹ 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.

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 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.

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

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.

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 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.).

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.

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.

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 in relation to the assessment of the Environmental Status under Descriptor 1 (Biodiversity) of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Such monitoring programmes could also be useful for other European Union relevant legal frameworks.

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.

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.

ANNEX 2

SYNOPTIC BASIN-WIDE SURVEY IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA
PERIOD 2024-2027

PROJECT PROPOSAL

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Executive Summary

The ACCOBAMS Agreement area (Mediterranean Sea, contiguous Atlantic area and Black Sea) contains key habitats for cetaceans and hosts more than 20 species, 14 of which are present throughout the year, as well as many other notable marine megafauna species. Most of the Mediterranean cetacean populations are considered "threatened" under the IUCN Red List due to significant human pressure and inferred declines over the last few years.

Robust knowledge of cetacean distribution and abundance is a prerequisite to *"take co-ordinated measures to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans"* and allow the evaluation of existing conservation measures to this end (see Article II of the Agreement on ACCOBAMS Purpose and Conservation Measures). These are shared objectives with the Barcelona Convention EcAp policy (and its IMAP framework), the EU Habitats Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (BSIMAP). Hence, the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) helps ACCOBAMS Parties to fulfil important parts of their obligations under several international policy and conservation frameworks.

In line with the main objective of ACCOBAMS, the ASI was set up as the first and most fundamental step to establishing a long-term programme for monitoring changes in abundance and distribution of cetaceans within the Agreement area. The first synoptic basin-wide surveys carried out in 2018-2019 helped to establish a technical monitoring framework and to collect the first synoptic baseline data on abundance and distribution of cetaceans at the Agreement area scale. However, in order to allow the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee to assess trends in cetacean abundance and distribution and evaluate their conservation status, periodic surveys at the same scale are necessary.

At the Eighth ACCOBAMS Meeting of the Parties (Malta, 2022), Resolution 8.10 on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) was adopted. This endorsed Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee on an integrated and coordinated transnational monitoring programme (the LTMP), inviting Parties to facilitate its implementation. In addition, it tasked the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, *"in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, to prepare, for the next synoptic basin wide survey a detailed technical document in the form of a project proposal, with a description of the different work packages, time-frame, budget and a SWOT analysis"*. This document responds to this Resolution by providing a detailed project proposal for the next synoptic basin-wide survey (2024-2026) that includes a full description of the project's governance structure and of its four work packages, a timeline, a budget and a SWOT analysis.

The aim of this document is to (a) facilitate the tasks of ACCOBAMS Parties in obtaining the necessary funds and identifying the appropriate in-kind support and (b) assist the Secretariat in exploring and identifying external funding opportunities. The present proposal heavily relies on the experience and lessons learnt from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative 2018⁹.

⁹ Reference documents:

- Final report of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative project (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf12).
- ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative - Evaluation Report (ACCOBAMS-MOP8/2022/Inf16)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean Sea, contiguous Atlantic area and Black Sea provide key habitats for cetaceans and host more than 20 species, of which 14 are present throughout the year (11 in the Mediterranean and 3 in the Black Sea). The ACCOBAMS area is also critical for many other marine megafauna species such as the monk seal, birds, turtles, and elasmobranchs. Most species of cetaceans in this area are considered "threatened" and listed on the *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species*, and are strictly protected by international and regional law, including those of the European Union (EU) and of the relevant Regional Sea Conventions.

The main objective of ACCOBAMS is "*to take co-ordinated measures to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans*"¹⁰. Tracking changes in the distribution and abundance of species is key to define and monitor conservation status, to optimise and adjust conservation measures according to species needs, and to evaluate whether conservation targets are being met. These objectives are shared with several international policy frameworks (see [Annex 1](#)). In particular, by fulfilling these objectives ACCOBAMS Parties also fulfil some of their obligations under the Barcelona Convention Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) policy and its Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP)¹¹, the EU Habitats Directive (HD) and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (BSIMAP) of the Bucharest Convention.

ACCOBAMS has prioritised cetacean population monitoring as a key aspect of its conservation strategy to achieve its main objective. In recent years, the ACCOBAMS Parties, Scientific Committee, Secretariat and Partners have worked extensively to develop a dedicated initiative to support the establishment of a long-term monitoring programme (LTMP) across the ACCOBAMS area. The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI) which was the first step of the ACCOBAMS long-term programme to monitor changes in cetacean distribution and abundance within the Agreement area, was officially launched during ACCOBAMS MOP6 in November 2016 after more than a decade of development and fundraising efforts.

The ASI project was a collaborative effort among riparian countries, national scientists, and over 40 national and international organisations, conducted from 2017 to 2022. Aerial and boat surveys, carried out during the summers of 2018 and 2019 applied a standardised methodological approach, resulting in an unprecedented dataset, across almost the entire ACCOBAMS area, on distribution and abundance of cetaceans, other marine megafauna, human activities and floating macro-litter. The ASI standard protocols on data collection and data analysis allow comparability of results with similar projects within the ACCOBAMS area, or data pooling for subregional modelling, where appropriate. Another positive outcome of the ASI was the establishment of a trained regional operational task force, raising awareness throughout the region, sharing substantial capacity and providing the tools for individual ACCOBAMS Parties to monitor their own marine wildlife. Finally, ASI has made significant contributions to international outreach in marine conservation efforts in the ACCOBAMS area by data sharing and publishing of peer-review scientific papers and technical documents, including: (1) a dedicated ASI Special Issue in the peer-reviewed journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*, (2) informing the IUCN Red List (re)assessment of Mediterranean cetaceans subpopulations and the UNEP-MAP Med Quality Status Report 2023 and (3) publishing the ACCOBAMS Status Report 2021 on "Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and adjacent areas". These initiatives allowed further showcasing of the initiative's results to a broader scientific audience. A non-

¹⁰ Article II of the Agreement on ACCOBAMS Purpose and Conservation Measures

¹¹ The Integrated Meeting of EcAp Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMON) meeting (Athens, Greece 27-28 June 2023,) emphasized the importance and urgency that ACCOBAMS finalise the necessary steps towards launching the next Basin Survey Initiative and encouraged the contracting parties to provide the necessary contribution. (ref. UNEP/MED WG.550/16/L.3)

exhaustive list of products is provided in [Annex 2](#). Moreover, various types of stakeholders (including governments, scientists, managers, and NGOs) have benefitted from the ASI data to address local, national, and regional conservation objectives, including in support of the submission and adoption of the North Western Mediterranean PSSA (Particularly Sensitive Sea Area) by the International Maritime Organization, conducting Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and developing Maritime Spatial Planning plans ([Annex 2](#)).

Some of the recommendations from the 2021 ASI technical workshop ([Annex 2](#)) were used by the Scientific Committee to develop its Recommendation 14.1 on monitoring efforts in the ACCOBAMS region (LTMP). The latter, in conjunction with insights from sustainability-related studies conducted during the project (including the ASI evaluation, the Roadmap for Financial Support to Future Efforts, and the *ad hoc* Working Group on Financial Aspects), culminated in the adoption of Resolution 8.10 at the Eighth Meeting of the Parties to ACCOBAMS (MOP8, Malta, 28 November – 2 December 2022).

Resolution 8.10 tasked *“the Scientific Committee and the Secretariat, in collaboration with the ASI Steering Committee and other relevant experts, to prepare, for the next synoptic basin-wide survey, a detailed technical document in the form of a project proposal”*.

In consideration of the above, the present proposal takes up the key elements of implementation of the previous ASI synoptic surveys (i.e. main activities, timeline, governance) and builds on the gained experience and lessons learnt on survey methodology, logistical needs, technical issues, the value of a consolidated network and a survey task force.

This proposal is intended to assist countries in identifying appropriate resources and capacities, in kind and financial contributions, and to support the Secretariat in exploring and identifying external opportunities for the next synoptic basin-wide survey in the ACCOBAMS area in 2024-2026.

II. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

There is widespread recognition of the need for monitoring programs that can assess changes in species distributions and abundances over large spatial and temporal scales, in order to predict and where necessary develop (and monitor the effectiveness of) management strategies to human pressures affecting conservation status. Effective monitoring efforts support national and regional policies by contributing towards understanding environmental status within the context of socioeconomic development. Estimating changes in the distribution and abundance of species is inherently complex, particularly when dealing with highly mobile and cryptic species such as cetaceans, whose ranges often span large areas and are subject to multiple human threats.

Despite the tremendous challenge posed by the geopolitical complexity of the ACCOBAMS area, the ASI has yielded significant benefits. Continuing this work is crucial, as the ACCOBAMS MOP8 has recognised the need for a next synoptic basin-wide survey in the ACCOBAMS area (the focus of this proposal) in the context of the ACCOBAMS LTMP. The protection of cetaceans and their habitats in the ACCOBAMS area presents substantial challenges and requires the Parties to consolidate and implement their monitoring vision at the basin wide and national levels, building upon the ASI and as expressed in the LTMP.

The ASI has established a critical baseline for assessing population trends over time by providing significant information and harmonising methods and protocols for data collection across the Agreement area. From there, it is crucial that countries continue to systematically and regularly implement coherent, synchronised, and harmonised monitoring actions (or establish them if they do not exist). By collecting systematic time-series of data at the appropriate scales, the conservation

status of these species can be regularly assessed and national and regional management strategies of multiple human activities¹² be developed, prioritised and evaluated in the context of restoring and maintaining favourable conservation status. Monitoring changes in distribution and abundance can also contribute to an understanding of the effects of climate change.

In addition to monitoring the distribution and abundance of cetaceans, it is important to understand the distribution and levels of human activities that can affect cetaceans - only some of which can be assessed via the LTMP approach. Thus hand-in-hand with the LTMP, Parties and stakeholders must work together to obtain a thorough socioeconomic understanding of potential and actual threats of human activities and their environmental impact. The ASI data has been helpful in supporting countries' development of protective spatial measures, conducting EIAs, and developing marine spatial planning strategies. To continue progressing towards a sustainable 'Blue Economy' and ensure the long-term viability of marine and maritime sectors, it is crucial to feed coherent marine spatial planning strategies with data obtained from systematic monitoring of cetaceans and their habitats.

Protecting cetaceans and their habitat can also benefit the wider biodiversity through a variety of mechanisms. It is recognised that 'charismatic' species like cetaceans can also serve as flagship species for conservation, influencing public opinion and raising awareness about the importance of preserving natural resources.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The implementation of this project as part of the LTMP will facilitate the task of ACCOBAMS Parties in fulfilling their national and international commitments. In particular, this project collects information on key features (species presence, population estimations, critical habitat identification, threat assessment) that are necessary to assess the status of species and populations in the whole ACCOBAMS area. It also allows the gathering of information on other protected species (e.g., sea turtles), some human activities and some types of pollution (e.g., floating marine litter, anthropogenic noise). The project enables ACCOBAMS Parties to respond in particular to commitments with regards to the Barcelona Convention EcAp policy, the EU MSFD and HD, the United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals* (UN-SDG), the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the *Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)* and the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*, etc.

With respect to ACCOBAMS, the project supports adopted conservation measures 2, 4 and 5 of Annex 2 of the Agreement (i.e. "*Assessment and management of human-cetacean interactions*", "*Research and monitoring*" and "*Capacity building, collection and dissemination of information, training and education*", respectively) and with Section 2 of the ACCOBAMS Strategy (Conservation Actions) and theme 5 concerning the improvement of knowledge for conservation contributing to the following specific objectives:

- 5.1 Centralise, organise and disseminate the existing knowledge on cetaceans, their habitat, the pressures and impacts, the national institutions, legislations and capacities¹³;
- 5.2. Identify the gaps in knowledge and propose actions or programmes to improve the knowledge on cetaceans¹⁴.

¹² The nature and significance of the impacts of many human activities, direct (e.g. ship strikes and incidental catch) or indirect (e.g. many types of habitat changes and various forms of chemical, noise and plastic pollution) and cumulative, are often not yet fully understood.

¹³ Currently supported by Resolution 6.13 Comprehensive Cetacean population estimates and distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area and Resolution 8.12 IUCN Red List Status of cetacean species in ACCOBAMS Area.

¹⁴ Currently supported by Resolution 8.10 ACCOBAMS Long Term Monitoring Programme.

The project is part of a comprehensive approach to ensure at the ACCOBAMS level, that stakeholders in the ACCOBAMS area have access to a coherent monitoring system for the species concerned in the Mediterranean/contiguous Atlantic area/Black Sea ecoregion, based on objective, robust and comparable data, with a view to improving the conservation status of these species and their habitats through appropriate management for the good status of the marine and coastal environments in the area of the study.

It is an essential contribution to many of the LTMP objectives, including:

- strengthen international cooperation and synergies between the countries of the ACCOBAMS area to enhance the efficiency of their efforts to establish a transnational approach to conserve the concerned species;
- obtain robust estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans and other threatened species in the ACCOBAMS area (at regional, sub-regional and, where possible, national scale) and enable eventual estimation of changes in the abundance and distribution of cetaceans (and some other species), at the appropriate scales;
- collect information on certain human threats and monitor changes in the distribution and relative abundance of certain human activities and marine litter;
- contribute to place-based conservation efforts, such as the identification process of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) and Cetacean Critical Habitats (CCH);
- facilitate the identification of high-risk areas of interaction between cetaceans (and other threatened species) and human activities in the ACCOBAMS area;
- inform adaptive conservation and management measures that allow achieving a favourable conservation status for cetaceans in the Agreement area and facilitate the improvement of conservation measures in place;
- contribute key knowledge that allows ACCOBAMS Parties to fulfil part of their obligations under ACCOBAMS and other conventions and multilateral agreements including the necessary information for the establishment and reviewing of reliable indicators and thresholds related to these species.

The project will also:

- enhance national capacity development and empowerment in the ACCOBAMS area for monitoring and conservation measures/policy development;
- contribute to the work on Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) for several species;
- raise awareness throughout the ACCOBAMS area on marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources;
- assist in examination of the effects of climate change on biodiversity.

In summary, this proposal has been developed taking into consideration the most recent international, regional and national strategies for the protection and monitoring of marine biodiversity and the efforts being undertaken by Parties in the ACCOBAMS area to meet their obligations and commitments in this respect ([Annex 1](#)). By improving knowledge of cetacean populations, the project responds directly to a set of international commitments of the ACCOBAMS Parties with regard to sustainable

use, management and conservation of the marine environment to achieve or maintain a ‘Good Environmental Status’ of the seas.

IV. PROJECT STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES

The project consists of four work packages, whose activities will take place over a 4-year period, ideally starting in 2024. Although the monitoring campaigns in the Mediterranean/contiguous Atlantic area and in the Black Sea area are to be organised over two distinct summer periods (2025 and 2026 respectively), several activities linked to the preparation of the field operations will be carried out transversally and in a synchronised and cooperative manner to minimise costs, optimise available resources, harmonise data collection and analysis efforts and increasing the impact and outreach of the project.

1. Work Package 1: preparation of the survey operations and capacity development

This component encompasses the essential preparatory phase of the surveys, incorporating a diverse array of scientific, technical, administrative, and logistical tasks. Its primary goal is to establish the groundwork for a smooth and efficient execution of the subsequent field operations, as well as to provide a regional capacity-building programme targeting the entire ACCOBAMS area. This phase ensures meticulous preparation to optimize the survey process and long-term monitoring capacities of ACCOBAMS Parties.

i. Expected Results

- **a modelling framework using ASI and other relevant spatial and density data as input** to evaluate survey choices among different line transect distance sampling strategies (e.g. with respect to sampling coverage and geometry), to obtain the most robust abundance (and distribution) estimates, to enable trends to be detected in the future (at both basin and more ‘local’ levels);
- **a complete set of survey protocols for data collection and analytical methods by species/groups of species** at the scale of ACCOBAMS area based upon experience and data from the ASI, taking into account the need for comparability/aggregation/pooling of datasets (including survey platforms and equipment, data collection protocols and software, survey design, analyses);
- **the development of appropriate human and technical capacities in the countries participating in the project**, in terms of survey implementation (including crew by region), regular monitoring of the species in question and feeding of information to assist the management of their critical and/or preferred habitats;
- **administrative processes identified and completed** (e.g., research permits, authorizations) and all logistics ready for the conduct of the field operations (including an active and responsive Contact Group, recruited Teams, all partnerships/contracts in place);
- **an updated information management system** for data storage and use, taking into account the existing ASI management system and by developing NETCCOBAMS functionalities, interoperable with other existing systems as well as allowing the pooling of all datasets.

ii. Main activities

A. REGIONAL CONSULTATION AND MOBILISATION

- mobilisation of each National Focal Point (NFP) and identified Contact persons to take part in the Project Contact Group;
- organisation of 2 regional Survey preparation Contact Group Workshops (one for the Mediterranean / Contiguous Atlantic area – about 40 participants - and one for the Black Sea about 15 participants).

B. DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL TOOLS

- development of a spatial modelling framework using existing ASI and other relevant survey data to explore line transect survey strategies (including frequency and geographical extent) which should allow for optimization by priority species or a priority group of species, and areas of specific interest, (areas with enough number of sightings to get more robust estimates, or areas where a specific intense anthropogenic pressure is acting over a specific endangered population);
- selection and contracting of the Scientific Coordinator and his/her associated experts;
- definition of the surveys monitoring operational method, adjustment of scientific protocols by monitoring sectors and targets, aerial and boat survey design, software identification and preparation;
- identification and purchasing of all equipment.

C. ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTICAL PREPARATION OF FIELD OPERATIONS

- identification and preparation of all permits and authorizations in a timely manner;
- identification and concretization of technical/scientific partnerships for field operations, at national and sub regional/regional level as needed;
- identification, call for tenders and selection of Aerial Companies and Research Vessel (call for tenders or direct MoU);
- identification and recruiting of human resources for field operations (observers and team leaders);
- planification of field operations processes and organisation (including coordination structure, security procedures, teams' daily life organisation).

D. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- assessment of regional capacity building needs and development;
- implementation of a training programme for local stakeholders by subregion or group of subregions, in the use of standardised survey methods and in information management (a minimum of 4 workshops, *i.e.* according to ACCOBAMS sub-region division¹⁵).

E. DATA SHARING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REVIEW

- study for an update of the information management system for data gathered during the survey exercise and in the medium and long term;
- the subsequent updating of the information management system (incl. IT upgrade, review of terms of use & data policy).

¹⁵ Black Sea, Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean.

2. Work Package 2: Survey implementation

The survey is to be implemented over two periods of time (summers), for the Mediterranean Sea/contiguous Atlantic area and the Black Sea, respectively.

i. Expected Results

- **Collect data** which will allow the implementation of WP3.
- **Presence/observation maps** to allow the public and project participants to view the progress of the surveys.

ii. Main activities

- survey teams training workshops for aerial and boat-based components (including HUET and any relevant safety trainings);
- implementation of the surveys coordinated by geographic sector and conducted using the agreed methodology/protocols – surveys will be conducted as follow:
 - for the Mediterranean Sea /contiguous Atlantic area:
 - an aerial survey campaign covering the largest area possible (Regional scale);
 - a regional - subregional boat-based survey campaign targeting deep diving species;
 - national boat-based surveys where aerial or regional - subregional boat-based surveys are not possible.
 - for the Black Sea:
 - an aerial survey covering the largest area possible;
 - international/national boat-based surveys where aerial surveys are not possible.
- Preparation of presence/observation maps.

3. Work Package 3: Data analysis and results

This component covers the analysis of the data collected during the surveys to estimate abundance and distribution of species at the ACCOBAMS area, regional, sub-regional (e.g. MFSD sub regions) and national levels; by means of spatial modelling method and identification of important habitats, as well as population trends in targeted areas, where possible. The interpretation of results in the context of conservation and management is primarily the responsibility of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

i. Expected results

- **distribution and abundance of cetacean species** at the regional, sub-regional (e.g. MFSD sub regions) and national levels, **identification of 'critical' habitats** and **trends in cetacean populations** using ASI and relevant data time series provided when sufficient data are available;
- ACCOBAMS area Cetaceans species **Conservation status updated** as relevant (IUCN red list of species);
- Contribute towards an **improved understanding of the impacts of the main human pressures** on the conservation status of cetaceans and their habitat;
- **data and results made available and disseminated** following an agreed data use policy;
- an **Atlas of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area**;
- Submit the abundance estimates to the IWC ASI sub-committee to obtain endorsement by the IWC Scientific Committee, as part of their global consideration of abundance estimates;

- Trial the use of the R package AMBIdsm developed by PELAGIS (University of La Rochelle) in the framework of EU-funded CetAMBICion project that allows to merge and analyse data coming from Distance Sampling surveys, build range surface models and estimate species abundance and distribution, and visualise density maps ([Research - CetAMBicion \(cetambicion-project.eu\)](https://cetambicion-project.eu)).

ii. Main activities

- definition of data analysis *modus operandi*, including the selection of a team of data analysis experts, under the direct guidance of the SC;
- sub regional data analysis sessions;
- Spatial analysis (distribution, abundance, habitat and distribution of pressures);
- Two regional workshops led by the interpretation of results for conservation and management recommendations, including on the need for updating of the IUCN lists;
- transfer of and securing data and results to the data management system and implementation of the sharing process;
- contribution toward the development of the Atlas of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area.

4. Work Package 4: Coordination and Communication / awareness

The project will be developed by regions or sub-regions depending on the participating countries and the current economic and safety situation. It will be coordinated at the Agreement area level by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat which will provide administrative and financial management, liaising with a Scientific Coordinator, the project's Steering Committee, the project's Contact Group and the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, and partners.

The ASI project has proven its significance in enhancing communication and awareness-raising efforts. It is important for the project to continue along the same trajectory and at least to replicate the successful actions that were implemented previously. Additionally, it is crucial to engage into a larger communication campaign, leveraging all past results and current initiatives to increase the project's influence.

i. Expected results

- **successful implementation of the project**, recognising the unforeseen constraints that may arise, e.g., political and weather;
- a **reinforcement of the network** of experts, specialists and other local stakeholders helping to conserve the species in question;
- an **increased awareness** among local stakeholders of maintaining/restoring the good status of marine ecosystem and biodiversity;
- Communicate the results and recommendations arising from WP3 to all relevant local, national and international (e.g., IUCN, IWC,...) stakeholders.

ii. Main activities

- overall coordination of the project, including running costs for the institutional governance of the project by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, communications and awareness-raising activities development and supervision. Additional external assistance may also be sought as necessary according to the needs;

- definition of communication strategy, priorities, and integration within the overarching ACCOBAMS communication strategy (so to utilise the project as a catalyst for implementing the broader strategy) including:
 - development of a specific campaign targeting institutions and decisions makers;
 - development of digital communication materials to support the communication priorities defined for the project and specific campaign (e.g., leaflet, brochure, video, press Kit, etc.);
 - support local communication actions on the sidelines of the surveys: definition of geographical and thematic communication priorities, development of ToRs and launch of a call for proposals to cover 8-10 small projects;
 - awareness-raising activities (participation to scientific and technical conferences, specific events during the survey campaign, social media public engagement, etc.);
- final Results Presentation Event and delivery of the Report(s);
- project final evaluation.

V. SWOT Analysis and Risk mitigations

1. SWOT Analysis

<i>Internal</i>	<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The knowledge gained during the successful implementation of the ASI. - Established network of partners and stakeholders. - Experienced team and coordinator with a track record of successful surveys. - Availability of proven survey methodology, techniques and equipment. - Strong support from governments and Regional Organisations. - Available research vessels and survey tools from project partners. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited funding for the project. - Strong dependence on volunteers / in kind support. - Some areas to be covered are difficult to access. - Limited time frame for conducting surveys (summer period).

<i>External</i>	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High public and media interest in marine mammal conservation allowing increased public and stakeholder engagement in marine mammal conservation efforts. - Fulfil international commitments, including EU obligations, for the ACCOBAMS Parties in regard to cetaceans (and sea turtles). - Possibility to coordinate surveys with other national monitoring programmes of Mediterranean and Black Sea countries (e.g., EcAp/IMAP and MSFD). - Need to enrich existing regional databases with valuable data on several mega fauna species and habitat use. - Inform policy decisions and management strategies. - Opportunity to collaborate with other marine conservation initiatives and organisations. - Potential to leverage project outcomes for future funding opportunities. - Increased research effort and research opportunities at the national level. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geopolitical instability, human related regional issues (migration, arising conflict areas). - Inflation and fuel costs. - Logistical difficulties in certain areas - Administrative difficulties including obtaining permits for accessing and surveying in certain areas. - Unusual weather conditions. - Risks inherent in working at sea and in the air (safety/security). - Difficulties to mobilise the necessary means for the field work (technical and human).
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2. Risk Analysis and Mitigation

Risk level		
Low	Medium	High

<i>Risk description</i>	<i>Related project Activity/WP</i>	<i>Likelihood</i>	<i>impact</i>	<i>Mitigation & adaptation actions</i>
<i>Mobilizing sufficient and appropriate technical and human resources</i>	<i>Survey preparation (WP1) & implementation (WP2)</i>			<i>Search for resources beyond the region Reassess the budget consequently Redistribute the effort coverage in different areas where appropriate Rotating system, moving observers and/or planes & boats from one area to another</i>
<i>Obtaining permits for surveying in certain areas</i>	<i>Survey preparation (WP1) & implementation (WP2)</i>			<i>Ensure enough preparation/application time Close consulting / meetings with national contacts and relevant departments</i>
<i>Unfavorable weather conditions for surveying</i>	<i>Survey implementation (WP2)</i>			<i>Keep a close watch on weather forecast and adapt surveys strategy Postpone surveys to favourable days Move to cover other transects with favourable sea state conditions</i>
<i>Logistical obstacles in certain areas (eg.: lack of fuel)</i>	<i>Survey implementation (WP2)</i>			<i>Close consulting / meetings with national contacts for preparation Ensure that each team has national observers Move to cover other survey favourable areas while fixing difficulties</i>
<i>Risks inherent in working at sea and in the air (safety)</i>	<i>Survey implementation (WP2)</i>			<i>Criteria to consider when selecting service providers such as aircraft companies Teams' security preparation (ex HUET training) All relevant security equipment (lifejackets, inflatable boat...) Security protocols in place Continuous assistance from coordinators</i>
<i>Geopolitical instability, human related regional issues (migration, arising conflict areas..)</i>	<i>All project and mainly Survey preparation (WP1) and implementation (WP2),</i>			<i>Security protocols for field operations Transferring activities to other areas (ie WS) Investigating the use of alternative technologies for surveying remotely</i>
<i>International hazards (ex. Pandemic (ex Covid)</i>	<i>All activities</i>			<i>Postponing activities Where possible, use online options</i>

VI. PROJECT GOVERNANCE

The project will be coordinated by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, through a full time Project manager (4 years) and a full-time assistant for administrative and communication aspects (two years), who will be:

1. responsible for overseeing all planned actions either directly or by coordinating with involved stakeholders and entities,
2. liaising with ACCOBAMS Parties and donors and
3. providing administrative and financial management.

A Scientific Coordinator (external consultant) will support the ACCOBAMS Secretariat on the scientific issues related to the implementation of the project, in particular as regards the scientific aspects related to the assessment and monitoring of cetacean distribution and population abundance.

As shown in Figure 1, the project will be supported by several key groups:

- the existing ASI Steering Committee¹⁶ which consists of representatives from key technical ASI partnering entities and of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (see figure 1). Additional experts and stakeholders may be added as needed upon request of funders and Parties. The project steering committee will provide guidance and advice to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat to help ensure the project's success, covering all aspects of project coordination, planning and budgeting;
- the ASI Contact Group composed of National Focal points (NFP) and/or designated Contact persons in each country of the ACCOBAMS area. This group is set up to assist the ACCOBAMS Secretariat during the project and will be particularly important for the preparation and implementation of the surveys. In particular, it will support proper operational execution of the surveys and all relevant activities, and facilitate contacts at national levels with all those involved over the course of the project cycle;
- the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and its relevant Tasks Groups, which will be providing guidance on matters related to their area of competence.

¹⁶ The ASI Steering Committee is composed by representatives of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (UNEP/MAP-SPA/RAC), Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB), PELAGIS, Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), Bucharest Convention Secretariat (BSC), and the Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

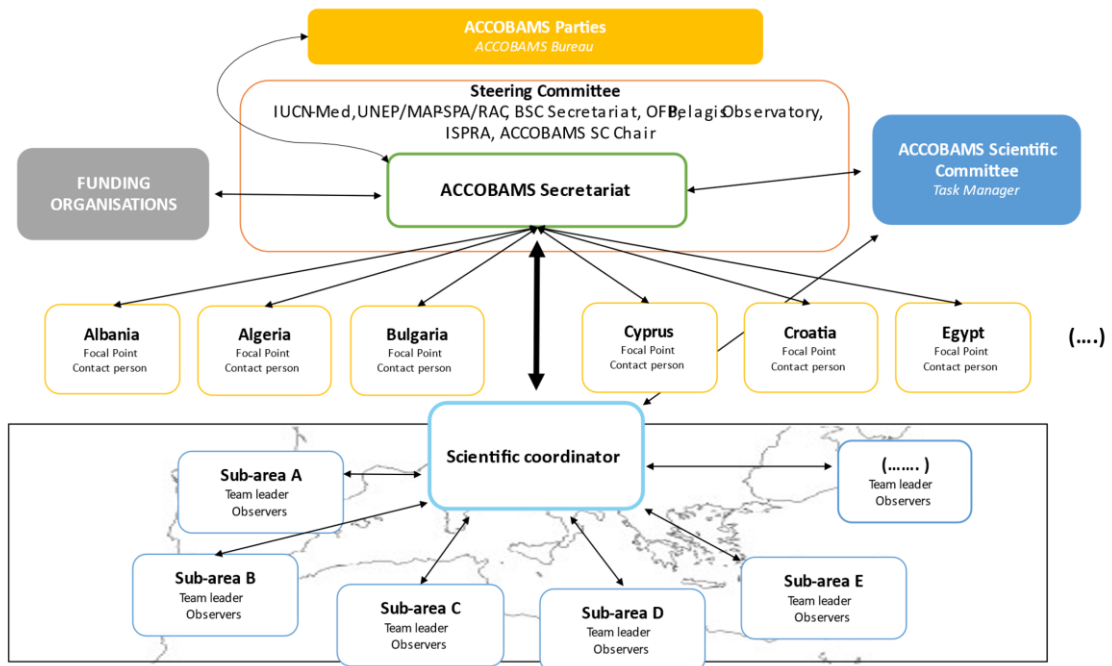


Figure 1. Project Governance structure

VII. TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.10 seeks to conduct the next synoptic basin-wide survey in the ACCOBAMS area in 2024-2026, to accomplish the entire program cycle by 2027. The proposed timetable suggests that monitoring in the Mediterranean and contiguous Atlantic area will be implemented first (in 2025), followed by monitoring in the Black Sea (in 2026). However, the order of implementation may be reversed, depending on financial, practical, and geopolitical considerations. If this is the case, the overall duration of the project would remain the same, but the timetable would need to be adjusted accordingly.

Milestones:

- Recruitment of Coordination personnel and Scientific coordinator by March 2024
- Survey methodology ready by May 2025 (survey 1) and May 2026 (Survey 2)
- Teams recruited and trained by May 2025 (Survey 1) and May 2026 (survey 2) (or one week prior to survey starts)
- All Permits and authorization obtained by April 2025 (survey 1) and April 2026 (survey 2)
- Regional Datasets ready by September 2025 (survey 1) and September 2026 (survey 2)
- Preliminary survey results ready by October 2026 (Survey 1) and October 2027 (survey 2)
- All results reports finalised and presented during Event by June 2027
- Recommendations from workshop on Interpretation of results for conservation available by September 2027
- All data transferred to data management system and ready for sharing by December 2026

	2024				2025				2026				2027			
	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4
WP 1- Survey preparation & capacity development																
Development of scientific & technical tools																
Spatial modelling framework development																
Selection and contracting of the Scientific coordinator and associated experts																
Definition of complete surveys methodology																
Identification and purchasing of all equipment																
Regional consultation and mobilisation																
Mobilisation of NFP & Contact persons for the Project Contact Group																
Survey preparation Contact Group Workshop(s) (2)																
Administrative and logistical preparation of field operations																
Identification and preparation of all permits and authorizations																
Set up of technical /scientific partnerships;																
Identification, call for tenders and selection of Aerial Companies and Research Vessels																
identification and recruiting of human resources for field operations																
Planification of Field operations processes and organisation																
Capacity development																
Assessment of regional capacity building needs																
Implementation of training programme by sub region (4)																
Data sharing & management system review																
Study for an update of the information management system for data gathered during the survey																
subsequent updating of the information management system (incl. IT upgrade, review of terms of use & data policy).																
WP 2 - Survey implementation																
Teams survey Training workshops (aerial and boat) (April-May)																
Implementation Mediterranean & contiguous Atlantic area survey (may-sept)																
Teams aerial survey training workshop (May)																
Implementation Black sea survey (June-July)																
Presence/Observation maps conception and preparation ¹⁷																

¹⁷ This is to be covered by the Data analyst, budgeted in WP3.

WP 3 - Data analysis & results interpretation															
Definition of data analysis modus operandi & selection experts															
Data analysis and reporting: analysis of the data collected during the survey (abundance and distribution of species);															
Spatial modelling, identification and characterization of critical and preferential habitats establishing links with the main human pressures and analysis of trends															
Sub regional data analysis workshops for a consultative and participatory approach (4)															
Reassessment and updating of the IUCN red/green list status															
Interpretation of results for conservation (Regional/sub regional workshops) (2)															
transfer of and securing data and results to the data management system and implementation of the sharing process															
Development of the Atlas of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS area															
WP 4 – Coordination and communication/awareness															
overall coordination of project by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat															
Project manager															
Admin and comm. assistant															
mobilization of the Project Steering Committee (Steering Committee meetings)															
project final assessment/evaluation:															
Communication priorities definition and integration into ACCOBAMS Communication Strategy															
development of a specific campaign targeting institutions and decisions makers															
development of communication materials															
Awareness-raising activities															
support local communication actions on the sidelines of the surveys															
final Results Presentation Event and delivery of the Report(s).															

VIII. BUDGET

Budget figures are derived from the actual costs/expenses that occurred in implementing the ASI and CeNoBS¹⁸ projects during the 2017-2022 period, as well as a few recommendations from the ASI Evaluation Report done in 2021. There is a high probability of potential cost increase, depending on market developments and inflation at the exact time when the next surveys will be put in place, which can be only estimated at present (*e.g.*, fuel prices). From a geopolitical point of view, the current situation in the Black Sea may also hamper monitoring efforts in the future, in this part of the ACCOBAMS area.

This budget is preliminary and is subject to adjustment as financial contributions are identified.

Work Package and actions	Estimated costs (euros)
WP 1- Survey preparation & capacity development	
Modelling framework development	50 000
Scientific coordinator and team for surveys preparation (incl. methods & protocols, survey design, software preparation, training support)	45 000
Survey preparation Contact Group Workshop(s) and meetings	60 000
Assessment of regional capacity building needs & implementation of training programme by sub region	125 000
Study and set up for an update of the information management system for survey data	10 000
Total WP 1	290 000
WP 2 - Survey implementation	
Aerial and boat-based survey teams training workshops	75 000
Aircraft renting	1 100 000
Research vessels renting and/or mobilisation	550 000
Purchasing of equipment	15 000
Team fees, daily life and transport	350 000
Scientific coordinator and team support fees (incl. training fees)	65 000

¹⁸ In the Black Sea, the survey was implemented thanks to the EU-funded 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.

Total WP 2	2 155 000
WP 3 - Data analysis & results interpretation	
Data analysis expert work ¹⁹	150 000
Sub regional data analysis sessions (4)	120 000
Interpretation of results for conservation (2 workshops)	50 000
ACCOBAMS area cetaceans' Atlas	50 000
TOTAL WP3	370 000
WP 4 – Coordination, communication & awareness	
Project officer (4 years)	240 000
Administrative and communication assistant (2 years)	110 000
Steering Committee meetings	20 000
External project assessment/Evaluation	15 000
Travel and meeting	30 000
External assistance	10 000
Development of communication materials	20 000
Awareness-raising events and participation to conferences	20 000
Local communication actions (call for proposals)	40 000
Results launching Event	20 000
TOTAL WP 4	525 000
TOTAL PROJECT ACTIVITIES	3 340 000

¹⁹ Which will also cover the preparation of presence/observation maps (planned in WP2).

ANNEX 1 - List of the most relevant commitments for ACCOBAMS Parties related to other policy frameworks in the context of benefits provided a new ACCOBAMS synoptic survey

Organisation	Relevant reference(s)
UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ; Targets in priority 4, 20, 21
Bonn Convention (CMS)	Appendices I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
Bucharest Convention	Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (BSIMAP)
Barcelona Convention (UNEP/MAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Protocol concerning specially protected area and biodiversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD), annexe II List of endangered or threatened species → Ecosystem Approach (EcAp; Decision IG 17/6) → Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP; Decision IG.22/7) → Actions plans for the conservation of cetaceans (Decision IG 25/13), sea turtles and seabirds (Decision IG.21/4)
Washington convention (CITES)	Appendices I and II ; Conf 11.4 (Rev.CoP 12) ; CoP14 doc 51 :
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/3 on reducing incidental bycatch of seabirds in fisheries in the GFCM area of application → Recommendation GFCM/35/2011/4 on the incidental bycatch of sea turtles in fisheries in the GFCM area of application → Recommendation GFCM/36/2012/2 on mitigation of incidental catches of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application → Resolution GFCM/43/2019/2 on enhancing the conservation of cetaceans in the GFCM area of application → GFCM/44/2021/13 on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of seabirds in the Mediterranean Sea → Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/14 on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of sea turtles → Recommendation GFCM/44/2021/15 on the mitigation of fisheries impacts for the conservation of cetaceans
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/CEE) → Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Directive 2008/56/EC) → Marine Spatial Planning Directive (Directive 2014/89/EU) → EU Action Plan on 'Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries' (COM/2023/102 final)
IPBES (2019)	IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services . E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages.

ANNEX 2 - MAIN PRODUCTS BASED ON ASI DATA

Product / Deliverable	Type	ACCOBAMS link (Direct / Indirect)
ACCOBAMS, 2021. Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and adjacent areas: an ACCOBAMS status report , (2021). By: Notarbartolo di Sciara G., Tonay A.M. Ed. ACCOBAMS, Monaco. 160 p. ISBN: 978-2-9579273-1-9	Book	Direct
ACCOBAMS, 2021. Estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans, marine mega-fauna and marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea from 2018-2019 surveys . By Panigada S., Boisseau O., Canadas A., Lambert C., Laran S., McLanaghan R., Moscrop A. Ed. ACCOBAMS - ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative Project, Monaco, 177 pp.	Technical report	Direct
ACCOBAMS, 2021. Estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the Black Sea from 2019 surveys . By Paiu, R.M., Panigada, S., Cañadas, A., Gol'din, P., Popov, D., David, L., Amaha Ozturk, A., Glazov, D. Ed. ACCOBAMS - ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative/CeNoBS Projects, Monaco, 54 pages.	Technical report	Direct
ASI Technical Recommendations Workshop - Moving from science to conservation, online, 11, 12, 14 &-15 October 2021.	Technical report	Direct
DiMatteo A, Cañadas A, Roberts J, Sparks L, Panigada S, Boisseau O, Moscrop A, Fortuna CM, Lauriano G, Holcer D, Peltier H, Ridoux V, Raga JA, Toma´s J, Broderick AC, Godley BJ, Haywood J, March D, Snape R, Sagarmínaga R and Hochscheid S (2022) Basin-wide estimates of loggerhead turtle abundance in the Mediterranean Sea derived from line transect surveys. <i>Front. Mar. Sci.</i> 9:930412. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2022.930412	Peer-reviewed publication	Direct
Popov D, Meshkova G, Vishnyakova K, Ivanchikova J, Paiu M, Timofte C, Amaha Öztürk A, Tonay AM, Dede A, Panayotova M, Düzgünes, E and Gol'din P (2023) Assessment of the bycatch level for the Black Sea harbour porpoise in the light of new data on population abundance. <i>Front. Mar. Sci.</i> 10:1119983. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2023.1119983	Peer-reviewed publication	Direct
Frassa V, Prospathopoulos A. M, Maglio A, Ortgea N, Paiu M, Azzelino A (2023) Shipping noise assessment in the Black Sea: insights from large-scale ASI CeNoBS survey data <i>Front. Mar. Sci.</i> Volume 10 – 2023 doi: 10.3389/fmars.2023.1200340	Peer-reviewed publication	Direct
New IUCN Assessments for Mediterranean sub-populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bearzi, G., Bonizzoni, S. & Santostasi, N.L. 2022. <i>Stenella coeruleoalba (Gulf of Corinth subpopulation)</i>. <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2022: e.T210188066A210188619. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2022-1.RLTS.T210188066A210188619.en. • Bearzi, G., T. Genov, A. Natoli, J. Gonzalvo, & G. J. Pierce. 2021. <i>Delphinus delphis (Inner Mediterranean subpopulation)</i>. <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i>: e.T189865869A189865884. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-3.RLTS.T189865869A189865884.en. • Cañadas, A. & Notarbartolo di Sciara, G. 2018. <i>Ziphius cavirostris (Mediterranean subpopulation)</i> (errata version published in 2021). 	Technical reports (10)	Direct

Product / Deliverable	Type	ACCOBAMS link (Direct / Indirect)
<p><i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2018: e.T16381144A199549199. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2018-2.RLTS.T16381144A199549199.en.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gauffier, P. & Verborgh, P. 2021. <i>Globicephala melas</i> (Inner Mediterranean subpopulation). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2021: e.T198785664A198787672. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-3.RLTS.T198785664A198787672.en. ● Gonzalvo, J. & Notarbartolo di Sciara, G. 2021. <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Gulf of Ambracia subpopulation). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2021: e.T181208820A181210985. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-3.RLTS.T181208820A181210985.en. ● Lanfredi, C., Arcangeli, A., David, L., Holcer, D., Rosso, M. & Natoli, A. 2022. <i>Grampus griseus</i> (Mediterranean subpopulation) (errata version published in 2022). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2022: e.T16378423A210404051. ● Lauriano, G. 2022. <i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i> (Mediterranean subpopulation) (errata version published in 2022). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2022: e.T16674437A210833690. ● Natoli, A., Genov, T., Kerem, D., Gonzalvo, J., Lauriano, G., Holcer, D., Labach, H., Marsili, L., Mazzariol, S., Moura, A.E., Öztürk, A.A., Pardalou, A., Tonay, A.M., Verborgh, P. & Fortuna, C. 2021. <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Mediterranean subpopulation) (errata version published in 2022). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2021: e.T16369383A215248781. ● Panigada, S., Gauffier, P. & Notarbartolo di Sciara, G. 2021. <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i> (Mediterranean subpopulation). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2021: e.T16208224A50387979. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-3.RLTS.T16208224A50387979.en. ● Pirota, E., Carpinelli, E., Frantzis, A., Gauffier, P., Lanfredi, C., Pace, D.S. & Rendell, L.E. 2021. <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i> (Mediterranean subpopulation). <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2021: e.T16370739A50285671. https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2021-3.RLTS.T16370739A50285671.en. 		
UNEP-MAP Med Quality Status Report 2023	Technical report	Indirect
Document MEPC 79/10. Designation of a particular sensitive sea area in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea to protect cetaceans from international shipping. Submitted by France, Italy, Monaco and Spain at the 79th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee, December 2022. 53 pages.	Meeting document	Indirect
Document NCSR 10/INF.3. Designation in principle of NW Med PSSA to protect cetaceans, minimizing the risk of ship strikes and support scientific research on the matter. Submitted by France, Italy, Monaco and Spain at the 10th session of the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue, May 2023. 12 pages.	Meeting document	Indirect
Fortuna, C., Sánchez-Espinosa, A., Rodríguez-Rodríguez, D., Abdul Malak, D, Podestà, M., Panigada, S. 2022. Pathways to coexistence between large cetaceans and maritime transport in the north-western Mediterranean region: Collision risk between ships and whales within the proposed north-western Mediterranean Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA), including the Pelagos Sanctuary. Factsheet, Interreg Med Biodiversity Protection project, 23 pages.	Peer-reviewed publication	Indirect

In addition to the above products, ASI data has been shared with a large number of different types of organisations. The table below show the requests for the Mediterranean and Black Sea ASI data received by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat since 2019 (updated September 2023).

NB	Request holder	Species / object	Type of data	Intended research
1	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.
2	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
3	McLaughlin Research Corporation , USA 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
4	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>
5	University of Siena, 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)
6	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
7	Observatoire Pelagis, Université de La Rochelle, France Auriane Virgili / Vincent Ridoux and collaborative work with INAT, ENIT, ESSAI, Tunisia;	Beaked whale sperm whale	Boat and aerial	Processes underlying beaked whale and sperm whale hotspots to inform naval training planning in the aim to avoid interaction with impulse noise sources
8	Israel Marine Mammal Research and Assistance Center (<i>IMMRAC</i>) 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
9	WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative Simone Niedermueller	Sharks and rays	Aerial	Evaluation of shark and ray occurrence data to inform WWF conservation strategy
10	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.
11	Open University, Germany Judith Matz – Student	Marine litter	Boat	BSc course report on ‘Distribution of plastic pollution across the Mediterranean Sea’.
12	Permanent Secretariat of the Pelagos Agreement Costanza Favilli – Executive Secretary	Cetaceans Marine Litter	Boat and aerial	Cetaceans and marine litter distribution and abundance in the Pelagos Sanctuary
13	University of Exeter, UK David March	Cetaceans Sea turtles, Fish, Rays, Marine litter	Boat and aerial	MOVEMED: Linking Human Mobility and Marine Megafauna Movement in the Mediterranean Sea for a better integration of Blue Growth
14	WWF France Denis Ody	Fin Whale, Sperm whale	Aerial	Evaluation des risques de collisions entre grand cétacés et trafic maritime sur la zone du projet de Zone Maritime Particulièrement Vulnérable (ZMPV) en Méditerranée Nord-Ouest.
15	EcoOcéan Institut, France	Bottlenose dolphin	Aerial	Consultation prior to the public debate on the development of floating wind power farm in the Mediterranean Sea over the shelf of the Gulf of Lion.

16	Istanbul University, Institute of Graduate Studies in Science and Engineering, Marine Biology program	Cetaceans Marine litter	Aerial	An abundance and distribution study of small cetaceans and marine litter in the Turkish part of the Mediterranean Sea using a species distribution modeling
17	Institut National d'Agronomie de Tunis/Observatoire Pelagis Université de La Rochelle	All	Boat and aerial	Ecosystemic and anthropogenic drivers of Mediterranean megafauna species assemblage spatial patterns
18	Office Français pour la Biodiversité	All species and marine litter	Boat and aerial	taking into account the environmental stakes for the off-shore wind turbine to be set up off the Gulf of Lion.
19	Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute	All cetacean species	Boat and plane Acoustic	Current knowledge on the cetaceans in the Greek Seas with emphasis on sperm whales
20	Cerema Eau, mer et fleuves, France Nathalie METZLER	All	Aerial	Technical document for proposal ZMPV Cetaceans in the Mediterranean in IMO
21	CREOCEAN, France Thibault Schwartz	Cetaceans and Seabirds	Boat and aerial	Study for the French Ministry of the Environment (Energy-Climate Department) to help in the selection process of future offshore windfarms in the Mediterranean Sea.
22	MCR (UK) & PELAGIS (France)	Cetaceans	Boat and aerial Acoustics	Modelling cetacean habitat: the merits and challenges of combining acoustic and visual observational data
23	MIRACETI, France Léa JURET / Hélène LABACH	Cetaceans	Aerial	Research and development contract relating to the implementation of a monitoring program for the bottlenose dolphin within the Cap Corse and Agriate Marine Nature Park
24	CNRS Centre d'Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive, Montpellier, France Olivier Gimenez	Fin Whales	Aerial	Combining data to estimate fin whales spatial density
25	SHOM Laura Ceyrac (Project manager underwater acoustic_Thematic Manager assistant of underwater noise descriptor MSFD)	Marine turtles, marine litter	Boat and aerial	Assessment of cumulated risks of marine litter and anthropogenic noise on marine turtles in Mediterranean Sea.
26	Office Français de la Biodiversité Marine Natural Park of the Gulf of Lions Camille ASSALI, Task officer within the MSPMED project https://mस्पmed.eu ,	megafauna, i.e. seabirds, land birds, cetaceans, sea turtles, large fishes, selacians.	Boat and aerial Acoustics	MSPMED task 2.2, deliverable 2.7 : France and Spain: knowledge synthesis about ecological stakes related with birds, mammals and deep habitats
27	University of Siena Maria Cristina Fossi	Marine Litter, megafauna	Boat and plane survey	Identification of Marine litter Hot spot areas and interaction with Biota (PlasticBusters MPAs Interreg –Med Project)
28	PELAGIS / MCR	Sperm whale and beaked whale	Boat and acoustic	Processes underlying beaked whale and sperm whale hotspots from acoustic detections to inform naval training planning in the aim to avoid interaction with impulse noise sources.
29	PELAGIS Lola Gilbert	Cetacean	Aerial	PhD thesis Role of marine mammals in nutrient flows and carbon storage
30	Bangor University James Waggitt and Peter Evans	Birds	aerial	Distribution modelling and environmental associations of Balearic and Yelkouan Shearwater in the northeast Atlantic and western Mediterranean.
31	Tour du Valat CHAMPAGNON Jocelyn	Birds	Aerial	MIGRALION - Characterization of the use of the Gulf of Lion by terrestrial migrants and marine avifauna using complementary methods
32	MIRACETI Julie Jourdan	Cetacean	Aerial	Cetaceans' spatio-temporal distribution within Calanques national park
33	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) Antoine Chabrolle	Birds	Aerial	Report for the evaluation of the 3rd cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) - 2024

34	Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) Timothée Poupart	Birds	Aerial	Coherence of the french Natura 2000 network for seabird conservation
35	Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie Marwen Abderrahim	Marine turtles, human activities marine litter,	Boat and plane survey	Assessment of nuisance sources affecting marine turtles populations on the Tunisian Coasts.
36	Spanish Herpetological Association (AHE) Juan A. Camiñas	Marine turtles	Boat and aerial	Challenges in managing and mitigating sea turtle bycatch, in pelagic longline and purse seine fleets (RFMOs from the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the Mediterranean Sea).
37	Tethys Research Institute Simone Panigada	Cetaceans	Aerial	Spatial models in the Hellenic Trench and Ionian Sea
38	Politecnico di Milano - Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering Arianna Azzellino	Cetaceans	Aerial	Testing applicability of the methodologies and tools of QUIETSEAS to promote the consolidation of indicators by performing an operational pilot on GES (Good Ecological Status) assessment for D11 (D11C1 and D11C2)
39	Observatoire Pelagis, La Rochelle, France Auriane Virgili / Vincent Ridoux	Cetaceans	Boat and aerial	Processes underlying cetacean hotspots to inform naval training planning in the aim to avoid interaction with impulse noise sources.
40	CNRS, Centre d'Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive (CEFE) Martha Mac Call and David Grémillet	Seabirds	Aerial	Production of habitat preference models and habitat change models (BIRDMOVE project)
41	Direction générale de l'énergie et du climat – Ministère de la transition énergétique Julie Pidoux	Marine megafauna species	Boat and aerial	Report on environment for public debates on offshore wind farm planning
42	MIRACETI DONEY Marine	Cetaceans	Aerial	Testing a methodology for estimating and quantifying anthropogenic impacts on cetaceans in marine protected areas
43	ISMAR – CNR Italy Elisabeth De Maio	Cetaceans	Aerial	Cumulative effects assessment case study for the Black Sea within the project H2020 BRIDGE-BS