

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

“ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative II” Scientific Coordinator

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Established under the auspices of the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS), the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) is an Intergovernmental Agreement aimed at achieving and maintaining a favorable conservation status for cetaceans through the implementation of coordinated measures. Its geographic scope encompasses critical habitats for a wide range of cetaceans of which many are listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List, facing increasing pressures from human activities such as overfishing, pollution, underwater noise, and habitat degradation. In response, the ACCOBAMS Agreement focuses on enhancing conservation measures, improving scientific understanding, and fostering international collaboration to protect cetaceans and their broader marine ecosystem. The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS, based in Monaco, ensures the coordination of the Agreement implementation and provides assistance to its Contracting Parties.

The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme

To strengthen the scientific basis for cetacean conservation and support evidence-based policymaking, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat developed the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI). Implemented between 2018 and 2023, ASI marked the first coordinated, large-scale survey effort across the Mediterranean and Black Seas, using a combination of aerial, vessel-based, and passive acoustic monitoring. This initiative generated essential data not only on cetacean abundance and distribution but also on other marine species and the various human pressures affecting the marine environment.

ASI's first iteration established a robust scientific baseline by mapping species distribution, identifying critical habitats, and highlighting key conservation challenges such as marine litter and underwater noise. These insights have played a pivotal role in guiding management actions, informing conservation policies, and contributing to international assessments, including updates to the IUCN Red List.

ASI-I thus provided a foundational baseline for monitoring population trends and laid the groundwork for regular and sustained monitoring of cetaceans and marine fauna over time. Through Resolution 8.10, adopted during the 8th Meeting of the Parties in 2022, ACCOBAMS member countries committed to facilitating the implementation of a Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP), which includes regular basin-wide synoptic surveys to systematically monitor the distribution, density, and abundance of cetacean populations across the ACCOBAMS area.

The ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative II – summer 2026 survey

Following the positive impact of the first iteration, the ASI-II project has been under development since 2023. Building on the successes and lessons learned from ASI-I, ASI-II aims to institutionalise and expand regular monitoring efforts across the ACCOBAMS area. This new phase will generate updated, scientifically robust data on cetaceans and associated species (e.g., sea turtles, seabirds, pelagic fish), while also assessing critical human-induced pressures such as underwater noise, marine litter, and fisheries interactions.

ASI-II is aligned with major international conservation commitments, including the ACCOBAMS Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Barcelona Convention

(UNEP/MAP) and Bucharest Convention. Additionally, the initiative will provide vital data for marine spatial planning, supporting sustainable resource management and a resilient Blue Economy.

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) contact group, and the Scientific Committee have all been actively engaged in driving this next phase toward implementation. Similar to ASI-I, the overall coordination of ASI-II is led by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, with support from the dedicated ASI Steering Committee¹.

The next major tasks for ASI-II in 2025 & 2026 are the preparation for the implementation of large-scale synoptic surveys in the Mediterranean Sea during the summer of 2026, and the assessment of the feasibility of implementing the ASI-II in the Black Sea in summer 2027. These surveys will employ a combination of visual (aerial and ship-based) and passive acoustic methods, with active participation from scientists across the ACCOBAMS region.

To support the continued development of ASI-II and ensure the preparation of the scientific approach and all necessary documentation for the 2026 Mediterranean survey, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat is seeking the assistance of a consultant to serve as the ASI-II Scientific Coordinator. The selected expert will be contracted to carry out specific tasks that will support the scientific and technical development of ASI-II throughout 2025. This work will be conducted under the supervision of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, in close coordination with the ASI Steering Committee, the Task Manager on Cetacean population estimates and distribution and a consultant already recruited to provide technical, administrative, and organisational support for ASI-II development.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is seeking a highly skilled consultant (hereafter referred to as the "Scientific Coordinator") with experience in cetacean surveys within the ACCOBAMS Area. The consultant will support the development of the ASI-II project, specifically in tasks related to the scientific aspects of the initiative and assist in preparing for a coordinated regional scientific survey effort in 2026. The Scientific Coordinator will play a key role in complementing the efforts of the Secretariat by providing scientific leadership, coordination, and expert input. This role will ensure the scientific integrity of ASI-II outputs and their alignment with the strategic priorities of ACCOBAMS.

III. REQUESTED TASKS

The Scientific Coordinator will support the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in addressing scientific matters related to the development and preparation of the ASI-II survey for 2026. This will involve preparing the necessary technical and scientific documentation, assisting with human resources and logistical preparations, and reviewing scientific/technical information for additional funding requests, as well as relevant documents for the ACCOBAMS 9th Meeting of the Parties (MOP9).

The work of the Scientific Coordinator will be structured in two phases:

- Phase 1: From UNOC3 (official launch of ASI-II) to MOP9 (June – November 2025)
- Phase 2: Post-MOP9 (subject to MOP decisions: November – December 2025)

The Scientific Coordinator will be responsible for a range of tasks, as outlined in the following list. Specific tasks to be executed during Phase 2 are clearly identified in the list below.

¹ The ASI Steering Committee is composed by representatives of IUCN-Med, SPA/RAC, Black Sea Commission Permanent Secretariat, ISPRA and OFB.

1. Methodological aspects

- Defining the overall survey design, including block structure, survey design among and within blocks, transect lines, and revising them as appropriate considering the available funds and means, the geopolitical and security situation in each country as well as the permit requests.
- Identifying the appropriate survey platforms (ships and aircrafts – some of them to be selected through calls for tenders to be launched by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat) and proposing technical improvements when necessary.
- Support assessing and identifying relevant partnerships for the boat-based survey component and oversee the development of its methodology/ Survey design, as relevant.
- Support the identification and assessment of relevant partnerships for the boat-based survey component and oversee the development of its methodology and survey design, as applicable.
- Support the development of a component related to the use of new technologies and platforms (e.g., drones, UAVs) and assess and identify relevant partnerships for this aspect.
- Review, as necessary, the scientific and technical elements to be included in the draft authorisation/research permit requests.
- Assist in revising the ASI-II Mediterranean Action Plan (including retro-planning and budget).
- Assist with the feasibility assessment of an ASI-II Black Sea survey in 2027 (Phase 2).

2. Data Acquisition and Management

- Review and update, as necessary, the ASI I data collection survey methodology and related protocols (including a list of required equipment).
- Review and confirm the use of the data collection software approach (i.e., SAMMOA).
- Prepare for all aspects of the 2026 data collection scientific coordination (Phase 2).

3. Human Resources Aspects

- Assist in identifying the scientific staff to be involved in the survey (observers, team leaders).
- Support the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in identifying sub-regional coordinators, as relevant.
- Assist in preparing training for the 2026 survey's aerial cruise leaders and observers (Phase 2).

4. Events, fundraising and MOP9

- Participate to UNOC3 ASI-II launch side event scheduled for June 11, 2025, in Nice (pending finalization of the selection process).
- Support in identifying potential funding sources and developing proposals for fund requests (e.g., FEAMPA).
- Assist the Secretariat with any event or meeting relevant to the promotion and development of ASI-II.
- Review ASI-II-related documents to be developed for the 9th Meeting of the Parties (MOP9) of ACCOBAMS.

The ASI-II Scientific Coordinator may also be associated to other tasks and activities to be performed under the project, and invited to provide advice and recommendations for all other scientific matters related to them.

For all these tasks, particular attention must be paid to:

- Ensuring close liaison and regular consultation with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (through the Task Manager on Cetacean population estimates and distribution) who will be reviewing all relevant documents, as per the mandate of ACCOBAMS Parties through resolution 8.10².

² Resolution 8.10 – paragraph 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.”

- Ensuring the active involvement and participation of scientists from all the countries engaged in the project, to the extent possible.
- Adapting project methodologies, where possible, to incorporate environment-friendly technologies and survey designs, in consultation with the Scientific Committee (through the Task Manager on Cetacean population estimates and distribution).
- Depending on available funding, focusing on capacity-building to ensure the development of regional capacities for supporting the establishment and implementation of a regional cetacean population monitoring programme.

If the MOP9 decision is favorable to the 2026 survey implementation, the mission of the Scientific Coordinator may be extended accordingly. This extension will be subject to a new contract, the terms of which will be discussed and prepared based on the evolving situation.

IV. BUDGET

The implementation of the requested tasks identified above (point III – REQUESTED TASKS) is to be distributed over a maximum of 7 consecutive months (Six-month duration, with a possible one-month extension, pending the decision at MoP9), from June to January 2026

The maximum available budget for the requested tasks is **25 000 Euros**, VAT Included.

Travel, transportation and subsistence expenses related to the participation in any meetings previously agreed with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, will be covered by the Secretariat.

V. CONDITIONS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF A PROPOSAL

A proposal should be submitted by an individual applicant who, if appointed through this call, will be contractually the unique contact point of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for all tasks related to the mission.

An applicant may propose to be supported by an expert/specialist (or group thereof) within the allocated budget as indicated in the above (point IV – BUDGET).

With a proposal, an applicant must provide evidence of the following:

- graduated in marine biology. A PhD on cetaceans' biology or ecology in the ACCOBAMS area will be an asset;
- proven experience in:
 - i. designing and coordinating cetaceans' surveys, with documented previous experience in aerial surveys;
 - ii. analysing data on cetaceans' abundance and distribution;
- be:
 - i. familiar with ACCOBAMS. Previous experience within the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee will be an asset;
 - ii. familiar with the regional policies related to the monitoring of the marine environment (e.g. EU MSFD and EcAp processes of the Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions);
 - iii. able to work well under pressure and to work effectively and harmoniously with people of different national and cultural backgrounds;
 - iv. able to plan and prioritise workloads and capability of meeting deadlines;

- v. persistent when problems or challenges appear;
 - vi. able to interact with others with tact and diplomacy;
 - vii. highly proficient in English (spoken and written) and with an intermediate or working knowledge of French;
- have excellent interpersonal skills, especially within multicultural/multilingual settings.

A proposal shall be accompanied by the following information:

- presentation of the applicant's background and relevant experience as regards the objective of the mission, including a CV and a list of scientific projects and publications in relation to the tasks to perform;
- a technical offer – description of the work to be carried out during the mission (maximum 4 pages);
- a financial offer – a detailed budget proposal, with the number of working days per task and the daily rate applicable, based on the maximum budget available.

In the event that an applicant proposes to be supported by an expert/specialist (or group thereof), the technical proposal must include a detailed presentation of each expert and/or specialist who will be supporting the interested applicant, including their CVs and relevant scientific references. The proposal should also describe the working arrangements within the consortium, as well as the distribution of tasks among the expert/specialist (or group thereof).

In the budget proposal, an applicant must provide a breakdown of the costs for each expert/specialist, including the expected number of working days per expert/specialist and the daily rate for each. The maximum available budget to cover the scientific coordination tasks, including fees for the Scientific Coordinator and, if applicable, the ad-hoc group of experts, is specified above (point IV – BUDGET).

VI. SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSALS

Applications should submit a proposal to the ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary (msalivas@accobams.net), keeping in copy secretariat@accobams.net, not later **than 26 May 2025**.

For additional information, clarification or any communication relating to this Call for Proposals, any interested applicant may write to msalivas@accobams.net, keeping in copy julieroxane@gmail.com.

VII. SELECTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Proposals will be reviewed by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in consultation with the ASI Steering Committee, the ACCOBAMS Bureau and the Task Manager on Cetacean population estimates and distribution.

The result of the selection process will be notified by early June 2025.