

## REPORTS OF THE LTMP CONTACT GROUP MEETINGS



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### **Note of the Secretariat:**

Through Resolution 8.10 on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme, Parties committed to facilitate the implementation of regular basin-wide synoptic surveys, by endorsing recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee, in order to ensure systematic monitoring of the distribution and abundance of cetacean populations in the ACCOBAMS Area.

Under the Resolution, Parties were invited to:

- ***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 ASI-I, taking into account the guidance provided in Recommendation 14.1 of the Scientific Committee***".

In this context, Parties were requested to officially appoint a national representative for the LTMP Contact Group prior to 31/12/2023. The composition of the LTMP Contact group as for October 2025 is annexed to this document ([see Annex I: LTMP Contact Group Composition](#)).

The LTMP Contact Group met five times between January 2024 and October 2025 to clarify and gather information on expected contributions from their countries (whether in cash or in kind), as required by Resolution 8.10.

The Meetings were all held online on the following dates:

- 29 January 2024
- 11 March 2024
- 18 June 2024
- 4 April 2025
- 1 October 2025

The reports of the LTMP Contact Group meetings are compiled in this document.

**REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE LTMP CONTACT GROUP  
ONLINE 29 JANUARY 2024**

The First Meeting of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) Contact Group was held online on 29 January 2024. A total of 38 members from 17 countries participated in the meeting. The list of participants is [annexed](#) to this report.

The primary objective of this first meeting was to discuss the development of the second edition of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II) and to collect the most recent information on the ASI-II development at the national levels, gathering input from each participating country of the ACCOBAMS Long-term monitoring programme contact group.

**I. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

1. The importance of capitalizing and replicating the first ASI under the "synoptic" framework proposed in the ASI-II project proposal, which is to be aligned with a specific Protocol, methodology and previous trainings coordinated by a scientific coordinator was stressed;
2. It was highlighted that the overall draft timetable needs to be streamlined so to enable the launching of the basic administrative requirements (mobilizing a scientific coordinator and a coordination team) towards the implementation of the ASI-II operational part to be deployed in the Mediterranean in 2025 and in the Black Sea in 2026;
3. The importance of having timely access to sufficient information on the financial and in-kind resources provided by the Parties for the initial phase of ASI-II was stressed, particularly as this information is crucial for the Secretariat to effectively engage with potential external donors.
4. In conclusion, it was mentioned that a table mentioning possible in-kind contributions would be provided by the Secretariat for the countries to fill-in their envisaged national contributions.

**ANNEX 1 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>NAME</b>
<b>ALGERIA</b>	Naciba LABIDI-NEGHLI
	Souad LAMOUTI
	Houda RIGHI
<b>BULGARIA</b>	Yana VELINA
	Marina PANAYOTOVA
	Dimitar POPOV
	Krastio DIMITROV
<b>CROATIA</b>	Katja JELIC
	Petra RODIC
	Martina MARIC
<b>CYPRUS</b>	Lavrentios VASILIADES
<b>FRANCE</b>	Florian EXPERT
	Vincent RIDOUX
	Vincent SZLEPER
<b>GEORGIA</b>	Tornike ZAUTASHVILI
<b>GREECE</b>	Charilaos NIKOKAVOURAS
<b>ITALY</b>	Cristina FARCHI
	Caterina FORTUNA
<b>LEBANON</b>	Céline MAHFOUZ
<b>MALTA</b>	Luke TABONE
<b>MONACO</b>	Ludovic AQUILINA
<b>MOROCCO</b>	Abdelali LOUDRHIRI
	Imane TAI
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	Marina SEQUEIRA
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	Tilen GENOV
<b>SPAIN</b>	Jose Antonio VAZQUEZ BONALES
	Joan GIMENEZ VERDUGO
<b>TUNISIA</b>	Dhekra HAYOUNI EP HABBASSI
<b>TÜRKİYE</b>	Ilgin AKPINAR
	Mehmet Arda TONAY
	Aylin AKKAYA
<b>ACCOBAMS Bureau Chair</b>	Marie Thérèse GAMBIN
<b>ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee</b>	Simone PANIGADA
	Ayaka Amaha OZTÜRK
<b>ACCOBAMS Consultant</b>	Hervé LETHIER
<b>ACCOBAMS Secretariat</b>	Susana SALVADOR
	Maýlis SALIVAS
	Camille MONTIGLIO

**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE LTMP CONTACT GROUP**  
**ONLINE 11 MARCH 2024 | 10:00 – 12:00 CET**

The Second Meeting of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) Contact Group was held online on 11 March 2024. The primary objective of this meeting was to provide an update since the Second Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group held on 29 January 2024 on the state of play of the ongoing preparatory phase, which is expected to be finalised during the first half of 2024.

**I. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

1. It was stated that the preparatory work of the Contact Group is of vital importance so to have clarity about if and when the next stage can be started, specifically, the scientific preparation required to implement ASI-II, which is necessary to launch the operational campaign in 2025 in the Mediterranean and in 2026 in the Black Sea.
2. It was further highlighted that only when clarity on sufficient available funding—both internal and external—is achieved, will the scientific preparation of ASI-II be able to proceed, namely through the recruitment of a coordination team, including a scientific coordinator, as planned, which is expected to happen during the first half of 2024.
3. It was concluded that the Contact Group will not meet again unless substantial new information is provided.
4. It was also concluded that new information on voluntary contributions or in-kind support is requested from the Contact Persons prior to 27 May 2024.
5. Finally, it was stated that by early June 2024 the Secretariat should report to the Bureau on the state of play of ASI-II funding in face of the project planning.

The [revised composition of the LTMP Contact Group](#) is annexed to this report.

**ANNEXE 1 - LIST OF ACCOBAMS NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS (NFP) & DESIGNATED LTMP CONTACT PERSONS***as of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

Country	NFP	LTMP Contact Person
<b>ALBANIA</b>	Elvana RAMAJ	<b>To be indicated</b>
<b>ALGERIA</b>	Naciba LABIDI-NEGHLI	Souad LAMOUTI
<b>BULGARIA</b>	Yana VELINA	Yana VELINA
		Marina PANAYOTOVA
		Dimitar POPOV
		Krastio DIMITROV
<b>CROATIA</b>	Katja JELIC	Katja JELIC
		Petra RODIC
		Martina MARIC
<b>CYPRUS</b>	Lavrentios VASILIADES	Lavrentios VASILIADES
		Maria PATSALIDOU
<b>EGYPT</b>	Mustafa FOUDA	<b>To be indicated</b>
<b>FRANCE</b>	Florian EXPERT	Florian EXPERT
	Nabil MEDAGHRI ALAOU	Vincent RIDOUX
<b>GEORGIA</b>	Tornike ZAUTASHVILI	Tornike ZAUTASHVILI
		Natia KOPALIANI
<b>GREECE</b>	Charilaos NIKOKAVOURAS	Charilaos NIKOKAVOURAS
<b>ITALY</b>	Cristina FARCHI	Caterina FORTUNA
<b>LEBANON</b>	Milad FAKHRI	Céline MAHFOUZ
<b>LIBYA</b>	Almokhtar SAIED	Almokhtar SAIED
<b>MALTA</b>	Darrin STEVENS	Luke TABONE
		Brian CHRISTIE
<b>MONACO</b>	Céline IMPAGLIAZZO	Ludovic AQUILINA
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>	Milena BATAKOVIĆ	<b>To be indicated</b>
<b>MOROCCO</b>	Abdelali LOUDRHIRI	Imane TAI
		Abdelali LOUDRHIRI
<b>PORTUGAL</b>	Marina SEQUEIRA	Marina SEQUEIRA
<b>ROMANIA</b>	Nela MIAUTA	<b>To be indicated</b>
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	Andrej BIBIC	<b>Tilen GENOV – to be confirmed</b>

<b>SPAIN</b>	Elvira GARCÍA-BELLIDO CAPDEVILA	Jose Antonio VAZQUEZ BONALES
		Joan GIMENEZ VERDUGO
<b>SYRIA</b>	Eng. Ruba AL KENJ	Eng. Belal ALHAYEK
		Eng. Ruba AL KENJ
<b>TUNISIA</b>	Dhekra HAYOUNI EP HABBASSI	<b>To be indicated</b>
<b>TÜRKİYE</b>	Ilgın AKPINAR	Arda Mehmet TONAY
	Gökçe AKAN	Aylin AKKAYA
<b>UKRAINE</b>	Volodymyr DOMASHLINETS	<b>To be indicated</b>

## REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE LTMP CONTACT GROUP

### ONLINE 18 JUNE 2024 | 10:00 – 12:00 CET

The Third Meeting of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) Contact Group was held online on 18 June 2024. A total of 21 members of the LTMP Contact Group from 17 countries participated in the meeting. The list of participants is [annexed](#) to the report.

The primary objective of this meeting was to provide an update on the progress made in the development of the second edition of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II) and to collect the most recent information on ASI-II development at the national levels, gathering input from each participating country of the ACCOBAMS Long-term monitoring programme contact group.

#### I. CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. It was stated that the LTMP Contact Group met three times in 2024 to gather information from countries on contributions, according to Resolution 8.10, which was necessary to have clarity on existing financial means. Such assessment was required by MOP8 as it is indispensable to determine the date of start and ending of the initiative, as well as for the launch phase of ASI-II, as reflected in the corresponding timeline.
2. It was further highlighted that the preparatory stage to launch ASI-II was expected to be concluded during the first half of 2024, to recruit a scientific team and to prepare the field work during the second half of 2024.
3. In face of the current situation, the discussions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> LTMP Contact Group Meeting held today (18<sup>th</sup> June 2024, online) resulted in main conclusions, which will be presented to the 16<sup>th</sup> Bureau meeting planned for this afternoon.

The first conclusion was to postpone the starting date of ASI-II to 2026, at this stage, to give time to:

- pursue the efforts of Countries and the Secretariat in seeking the necessary funding for launching the initiative.
  - 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 ASI-II.
4. The second conclusion was that there is an urgent need to recruit a full-time ASI-II Project manager and a full-time administrative assistant in the Secretariat, as well as the Scientific Coordinator.
  5. The third conclusion was that there is a need to consult the Scientific Committee and other relevant experts on the need to adapt the current ASI-II, including the survey design, bearing in mind new and environmentally friendly technologies and the need to reduce costs.



## ANNEX 1 - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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## REPORT OF THE 4TH MEETING OF THE LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAMME CONTACT GROUP

### ONLINE – 4 APRIL 2025 | 10:00 – 12:00 CET

The Fourth Meeting of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) Contact Group was held online on **4 April 2025, from 10:00 to 12:00 CET**. A total of 21 members from 16 countries participated in the meeting. The list of participants is [annexed](#) to this report.

The primary objective of this meeting was to provide an update on the progress made in the development of the **second edition of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II)** and to collect the most recent information on the ASI-II development at the national levels, gathering input from each participating country of the ACCOBAMS Long-term monitoring programme contact group.

#### I. OPENING AND PRESENTATION OF PROGRESS

1. Mrs. Maylis Salivas, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and presenting the agenda. She then delivered a presentation summarizing the latest developments related to ASI-II since the last LTMP Contact Group meeting held in June 2024.) The presentation is [annexed](#) to this report.
2. She began by revisiting the background of ASI-II, referring to the 8th Meeting of the Parties (MoP8) and the endorsement of Resolution 8.10, "*ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme*." This resolution outlines the framework for the next synoptic, basin-wide survey to be organized as part of ASI-II.
3. Mrs. Salivas then highlighted the recent key developments, stemming from the conclusions of the last LTMP Contact Group meeting, as well as from the subsequent 16<sup>th</sup> and most recent 17<sup>th</sup> Bureau meetings.
4. She mentioned that the Secretariat has launched a consultancy call for an expert to provide advisory, technical, and administrative support for the development of ASI-II in 2025. Offer submitted by Ms. Julie Belmont (former ASI-I Project Officer) was selected.
5. Mrs Salivas then announced that a proposal was submitted by the Secretariat to organize a side event on ASI-II during the upcoming United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in the Blue Zone. This initiative has received strong support from 13 ACCOBAMS Parties and 14 partners, including CMS and IWC. The event aims to reaffirm countries' commitment and showcase tangible support for this key ACCOBAMS initiative.
6. She finally presented the Three-Phase Approach for 2025 as follows:
  - *Phase 1 (March–June 2025)*: Preparation for the UNOC3 side event and initiation of ASI-II organizational activities.
  - *Phase 2 (July–November 2025)*: Continued preparation for ASI-II, including the development of LTMP and ASI-II documentation for MoP9, along with intensified fundraising efforts.
  - *Phase 3 (November–December 2025)*: Subject to decisions made at MoP9, this phase will focus on scaling up preparations for the full-scale 2026 survey.

## II. REMARKS FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

7. Dr. Simone Panigada, Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (SC), addressed the participants, noting that 2025 will be a demanding year with tight schedules. He expressed the Committee's strong commitment to supporting ASI-II by providing scientific advice and guidance, coordinated by Mr. Tilen Genov, Task Manager for the Working Group on Cetacean Population Estimates and Distribution.
8. Dr. Simone Panigada emphasized that one of the most important actions of the next triennium is the continuation of ASI. He recalled the significant outputs published in *Frontiers*, derived from ASI I, which have been downloaded thousands of times, underscoring the scientific robustness and relevance of the initiative. The continuity of data and time series was stressed as a key element for the long-term monitoring of cetaceans.

## III. NATIONAL UPDATES

9. A roundtable was held, where participants were invited to share the latest updates regarding the development of ASI-II at their national level. The information is synthesized in the table below.

COUNTRY	INFORMATION UPDATE
<i>Albania</i>	<i>Absent</i>
Bulgaria	The representative from Bulgaria did not have the opportunity to participate in the meeting, but reaffirmed the commitment of the country in written by email (the amount of voluntary contribution for Bulgaria is 30 000 BGN per year, which is equivalent to 15 300 euros per year, so for 3 years it is 45 900 euros; it could be based only on contract and after the official launch of the project ASI-II)
Croatia	The representative from Croatia stated that the country was in the process of preparing a national aerial survey project. Field work is expected to begin in 2026.
Cyprus	The representative of stated that Cyprus is finalizing the procedures and preparations to conduct research expeditions during the second half of 2025 and throughout 2026.
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Absent</i>
France	<p>The representative from France stated that France fully supports ASI-II, emphasizing its importance within its obligations towards the MSFD. A common approach is crucial to achieve the stated objectives. However, financial issues remain a major concern.</p> <p>Regarding the feasibility of mobilizing European FEAMPA funds in addition to national participation it was stated that:</p> <p>There is a possibility of using funds outside EU. The results are rather encouraging in this regard.</p> <p>Regarding transfer of funds to an international organisation, this seems feasible if the project is carried out by a French actor in collaboration with ACCOBAMS.</p> <p>It was stated that France also offers its support for the side event UNOC.</p> <p>It was noted that the results of ASI are particularly interesting and widely used in scientific work in France. The PELAGIS laboratory has been actively involved in several analyses and has valuable insights to share regarding the scientific and methodological approach of ASI-II.</p>
Georgia	The representative of Georgia stated that at this stage, they do not have any updates regarding the development of ASI-II at the national level. However, they would like to highlight that Ilia State University has been conducting year-round surveys on marine mammals in Georgian waters since 2014, using passive acoustic monitoring

	<p>to study cetacean distribution, seasonal activity, and behavior. The University is ready to actively contribute to the ASI-II initiative.</p> <p>In parallel, they would also like to note that under an environmental decision issued by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, there are survey requirements in certain places for certain activities that may impact the marine environment. These requirements aim to ensure that potential effects on cetaceans are properly assessed and monitored. The research aims to avoid impacts on cetaceans while monitoring populations, assessing human-induced pressures, and identifying key periods such as migration and breeding seasons.</p> <p>Findings show that cetacean activity peaks in winter, spring, and early summer, underscoring the importance of these periods. Additionally, the studies have shown that dredging and other human activities present notable risks to marine mammal populations, reinforcing the need for appropriate mitigation measures.</p>
Greece	The representative from Greece provided the Secretariat with a statement presenting national activities that they could benefit updated information towards the ASI project in Eastern Mediterranean region. The statement provided is <a href="#">annexed</a> to this report.
Italy	The representative from Italy recalled recent discussions within the Scientific Committee and a national meeting held with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat in Italy, reaffirming the country's commitment to contributing to ASI-II. A large-scale marine survey, initially planned earlier, has now been rescheduled for 2026 to align with the ASI-II timeline. This survey, covering all Italian seas, will support Italy's obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Coordination with ASI-II is therefore essential. The representative also expressed its willingness to provide support beyond its national waters, including in surrounding sea areas, and is exploring opportunities for additional contributions.
Lebanon	The representative of Lebanon stated that the CNRS will facilitate the obtention of permits and authorization for the survey and that the scientific vessel CANA will be made available for the survey along with scientific researchers.
Libya	<i>Absent</i>
Malta	Regarding the surveying of cetaceans, the representative of Malta stated that Malta is in the process of developing the relevant procurement documentation for publishing probably later this year, with implementation of surveys related to cetaceans expected to be carried out in 2026. These are planned to include both vessel-based and aerial-based surveys within the Fishery Management Zone and marine protected areas, and this in line with Malta's MSFD monitoring programme.
Monaco	The representative from Monaco reaffirmed its commitment to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and pledges to mobilize both human and budgetary resources. The Government will facilitate the necessary administrative procedures for the project's implementation within the Principality. Additionally, a voluntary contribution of €75,000 will be made for the year 2025.
Montenegro	<p>The representative of Montenegro was absent.</p> <p>Unofficial information was provided to the group by Ms Aylin Akkaya , informing that two EU-funded monitoring projects are planned to start within the next year. The country currently has an active monitoring programme, which includes both vessel-based and land-based survey efforts. Montenegro expressed its intention to contribute to ASI-II through both in-kind and financial support.</p>
Maroc	The representative of Morocco acknowledged Ms. Salivas on her new position and reiterated its support for the ASI-II project, reflecting its previous involvement in ASI-I. The country indicated its readiness to participate again with the involvement of INRH scientists to conduct the planned studies. Support is also planned for authorization aspects, particularly air permits.

	National-level steps will start as soon as ASI-II project is officially launched. It has been noted that approaching the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be important to facilitate obtaining the necessary permits to implement the activities.
Portugal	<p>The representative from Portugal indicated that, due to the current election context, no concrete information is available at this stage regarding the allocation of national funding to ACCOBAMS for ASI-II. It was noted that further clarification will be sought following the formation of the new government in May.</p> <p>Efforts will be made to explore options for securing financial support and to determine whether funds can be transferred to support the initiative. Two scenarios were outlined :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If national funding is secured and transferable to ACCOBAMS, Portugal plans to cover the ACCOBAMS extended as part of ASI-II.</li> <li>2. If a transfer is not possible, Portugal would still aim to conduct a national-level survey, similar to its participation in SCANS, while remaining committed to contributing to the Extended area if feasible.</li> </ol>
Romania	<i>Absent</i>
Slovenia	The representative from Slovenia confirmed its previous commitment to the ASI-II, and will contribute to it in line with what was done for ASI-I: contributing to the aerial survey in the Adriatic Sea proportionally to the transect length for Slovenia
Spain	<p>The representative from Spain confirmed that an aerial survey is scheduled for 2025. Although there were attempts to postpone it to 2026, this was not possible, as the survey must be completed before May 2026. At this stage, no additional financial support has been secured for 2026.</p> <p>However, Spain expressed its willingness to assist the Secretariat in identifying potential private donors within the country. Additionally, the IEO (Spanish Institute of Oceanography) has shown openness to collaborate, particularly by contributing time and expertise for both the survey and subsequent data analysis.</p>
Syria	<i>Absent</i>
Tunisia	<i>Absent</i>
Türkiye	The representative from Türkiye stated that, as previously mentioned in the LTMP Contact Group Meeting, are actively seeking both national and international funding opportunities. The budget required for national surveys within Turkish maritime jurisdiction areas must be requested annually. Additionally, marine mammals have been incorporated into the national integrated pollution monitoring program, which has been running since 2014 in the Turkish waters. Furthermore, the process of updating the marine mammal monitoring guide, developed as part of this program, is ongoing in alignment with the ACCOBAMS monitoring guidelines. They are also preparing a project specifically focused on cetaceans to secure international funding for their monitoring and conservation. It is expected that the outcomes of the project will contribute to ASI-II.
Ukraine	The representative from Ukraine informed about the progress of ongoing BlackCeTrends initiative for the stationary passive acoustic monitoring of cetaceans in the Black Sea which launched in 2020, at present covers research effort from five ACCOBAMS countries (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine) and includes almost 20 stationary points of observation. Some important results were already obtained about the seasonality of porpoise occurrence throughout the coastal Black Sea waters. Such an approach seems to be a promising part of multidisciplinary effort which can be scaled onto other ACCOBAMS subregions.

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND NEXT STEPS

##### Regarding the Scientific Coordinator:

10. The urgency of appointing a Scientific Coordinator was strongly emphasized to update the ASI-II project proposal. A call for applications is expected to be launched soon.
11. The ASI-II scientific coordinator will utilize the existing survey design, updating it based on the current geopolitical context, lessons learned from ASI-I, and regional survey priorities.

##### Regarding National-level Involvement:

12. Regarding National-level involvement, Ms. Belmont reminded the group of the critical importance of receiving national-level feedback in the coming months to ensure accurate assessments of country-specific contexts.
13. She stated that further contact will be made in the upcoming weeks to complete information related to implementation aspects, including administrative matters, research permits, and security considerations.

##### UNOC3 side-event:

14. Ms. Salivas reiterated that UNOC3 represents a pivotal opportunity to launch ASI-II and to announce both financial and in-kind contributions to ASI-II.
15. She stated that responses to proposals submitted for the ASI-II side event at UNOC will be received during the week of April 14, 2025.
16. If the side event is not accepted in Blue-zone, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat will propose an off-site side event.
17. The Chair of ACCOBAMS, Ms. Marie Therese Gambin, thanked all Parties for their valuable information and ongoing support of the initiative, while encouraging continued efforts to seek additional resources.

## ANNEXE 1 – PARTICIPANTS LIST

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## ANNEX 2 - PRESENTATION ON ASI-II DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

### BACKGROUND

#### Resolution 8.10 "ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme"

*The ACCOBAMS Parties 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**".*

- Project finalised in 2023 by the Secretariat & Scientific Committee & technical support based on ASI legacy & post evaluation
- Project circulated to all Parties on 5/10/2023, through their National Focal Points.
- Parties were also requested to officially indicate the following, prior to 31/12/2023:
  - *To officially indicate 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;*
  - *To appoint a national representative for the LTMP Contact Group.*

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online



### THE LTMP CONTACT GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUNDING OF ASI2

- 3 Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group in January, March and June 2024.
- At their last meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024, the LTMP Contact Group concluded the following:
  - the starting date of **ASI-II should be postponed to 2026**
  - **urgent need** to recruit a full-time ASI-II Project manager, a Scientific Coordinator and a full-time administrative assistant in the Secretariat.
  - **need to adapt the current ASI-II project**, including the survey design, bearing in mind new and environmentally-friendly technologies and the **need to reduce costs**.

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online



## THE 16<sup>TH</sup> BUREAU MEETING

The 16<sup>th</sup> Bureau Meeting was held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024 to:

- **assess the preparatory stage** preceding the launching of the ASI-II Project
- **take a decision**, in accordance with article 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Bureau.

### Conclusions:

1. Need to update the initial timeline particularly regarding the ASI-II fieldwork.
2. To plan ASI-II 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
  - use the *momentum* of the political context of the 2025 **UNOC** to increase visibility of ASI-II project.
3. To adapt the project methodologies, considering environmentally-friendly technologies, and survey design in consultation with the Scientific Committee.

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

ACCOBAMS

## THE 16<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

In December 2024, the SC16 adopted Recommendation 16.3 - "ASI-II and the ACCOBAMS LTMP" recommending :

*"that the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Chair of the Scientific Committee, and the support of the Bureau, reignites urgent contacts with the Parties to:*

- *reiterate in a practical manner their commitment to Resolution 8.10 on the ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme and especially ASI-II;*
- *secure the necessary financial contributions or at least formal commitments by or soon after the extended Bureau meeting to allow the necessary planning time for a summer 2026 survey."*

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

ACCOBAMS

## THE 17<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE BUREAU

At the recent ACCOBAMS Bureau Meeting on 13-14 February 2025, the Bureau acknowledged the necessity of **hiring coordination staff to assist the Secretariat with administrative tasks**, such as obtaining permits for surveys in national waters and securing funding + **SC coordinator**

The Bureau invited the Secretariat to:

- a) transfer the available budget of the Budgetary Line "ACCOBAMS Project Officer" to the to the Budgetary Line "External assistance", in accordance with paragraph 15 of Annex 3 of the Resolution 8.2;
- b) launch Calls for the appointment of a Scientific Coordinator and consultants to assist the Secretariat in initiating ASI-II using, where necessary, remaining funds from ASI-1, and funds from Budgetary Line "External assistance".

They also endorsed the Secretariat's plan to hold a **side event** for the launch of the Second ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II) **UNOC3**, France, from 9-13 June 2025.

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

**ACCOBAMS**

## SINCE THE 17<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE BUREAU

**Consultancy Call for ASI-II Development:** The Secretariat has launched a consultancy call for an expert to provide advisory, technical, and administrative support for the development of ASI-II  
=> offer from Ms. Julie BELMONT, whose application meets all the requested expectations.

**ASI-II Side Event at UNOC3:** The Secretariat has submitted a request to host an ASI-II side event at the UNOC3 conference venue (the Blue Zone).

- highlight the results of ASI and their significant impact on advancing scientific knowledge and supporting regional and national marine conservation policies (e.g., IUCN Red List, MedQSR, ECAP, and MSFD).
- provide a unique opportunity to officially announce the launch of ASI II, paving the way for additional funding and collaborations.
- be an opportunity for countries to reaffirm their commitment and to demonstrate concrete support for this priority ACCOBAMS action

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

**ACCOBAMS**

## SINCE THE 17<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE BUREAU

**ASI-II Side Event at UNOC3:** The Secretariat has submitted a request to host an ASI-II side event at the UNOC3 conference venue (the Blue Zone) => response during the week of 14 April 2025.

We have received support from 13 ACCOBAMS Parties and 14 partner organisations.

Pays/Entité	Département/Direction
BULGARIE	Ministry of Environment and Water
CROATIA	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Green Transition / Institute for Environment and Nature
CYPRUS	Ministry of Agriculture rural development and environment / Department of Fisheries and Marine Research
FRANCE	Direction de l'eau et de la biodiversité du Ministère de la Transition écologique, de la Biodiversité, de la Forêt, de la Mer et de la Pêche
GEORGIE	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture
ITALY	Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Sicurezza Energetica / Direzione Generale tutela della Biodiversità e del Mare
LEBANON	National Center for Marine Sciences / National Council for Scientific Research
MAITA	Environment & Resources Authority
MAROC	Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Pêche Maritime, du Développement Rural et des Eaux et Forêts / Secrétariat d'Etat Chargé de la Pêche Maritime
MONACO	Département des Relations Extérieures et de la Coopération
PORTUGAL	Serviços de Ambiente Marinho o Sustentabilidade
SLOVENIA	Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning / Biodiversity Division
SPAIN	Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge

BSC PS	Permanent Secretariat of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
CIESM	The Mediterranean Science Commission
IFAW	International Fund for Animal Welfare
IUCN-Med	International Union for the Conservation of Nature – Mediterranean programme
IWC	International Whaling Commission
Mare Nostrum	Mare Nostrum NGO
MedPAN	MedPAN / Network of Marine Protected Areas managers in the Mediterranean
MIRACETI	MIRACETI
OceanCare	OceanCare
Office français de la Biodiversité	Office français de la Biodiversité / Direction de la surveillance, de l'évaluation et des données
Sustainable Ocean Alliance	Sustainable Ocean Alliance
Tethys	Tethys Research Institute
The MedFund	The MedFund

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

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## PROPOSED STEPS IN 2025

### Phase 1: Preparing for UNOC3 and Initiating ASI-II Organisation (March - June 2025)

- ASI-II launch side-event during UNOC3.
- ASI-II progress update for the next Extended Bureau meeting (April 21-23).
- Mobilize the LTMP contact group to support obtaining an overview of the situation in each ACCOBAMS country (permits, logistics, security).
- Starting ASI-II organization (administrative / logistical tasks)
- Recruit a SC coordinator to start before UNOC3
- Accelerate fundraising efforts

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

ACCOBAMS

## PROPOSED STEPS IN 2025

### Phase 2: From UNOC3 to MOP9 (July – November 2025)

- Prepare of ASI-II, including:
  - Revise the ASI-II Mediterranean Action Plan (retro-planning, budget).
  - Prepare drafts for calls for tenders, MoUs, contracts, templates, and recruitment calls for ASI project officer(s).
  - Survey design and monitoring protocol development.
  - Continue mobilizing the LTMP contact group to support obtaining an overview of the situation in each ACCOBAMS country (permits, logistics, security).
  - Draft research permit applications in the survey area.
  - Continue fundraising efforts.
- Prepare LTMP and ASI-II documents for MOP9.

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online

## PROPOSED STEPS IN 2025

### Phase 3: Post MOP9 (**Conditioned by MOP Decisions** : November - December 2025)

- Finalise and submit permit applications.
- Continue mobilizing the LTMP contact group to support implementation of ASI-II.
- Identify scientific teams and monitoring platforms (plane, boat, tender launch, contract, MoU, etc.).
- Organise ASI-II training for observers.
- Update the ASI-II Mediterranean Action Plan (retro-planning, budget).
- Start defining an ASI-II communication strategy.

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group - 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Online



## ANNEX 3 – GREECE STATEMENT



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
 MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY  
 GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY  
 DIRECTORATE OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND  
 BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

To:

**ACCOBAMS Secretariat**

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Re: «GREECE: Statements to the LTMP ACCOBAMS NP Meeting »

Regarding the Hellenic Ministry of the Environment and Energy the following Statements to the ACCOBAMS Secretariat are included so that they could benefit updated information towards the ASI project in Eastern Mediterranean region:

**JOINT MINISTERIAL DECISIONS and PROJECTS:**

- a) **Legislation of Measures for the operation of the Nationally Coordinated Network for monitoring and managing the stranding of marine wildlife species (cetaceans, seals, sea turtles and chondrichthyans).** (Official Gazette 3376/B/19-5-2023 and 3926/B/20-6-2023). The coordinator of the first group of 14 organizations for the cetaceans is the Cetacean Rescue and Rehabilitation Research Center – “ARION” and for the Mediterranean Monk Seals is the Hellenic Society for the Study of the Mediterranean Monk Seal- “MOM”. There is also, “ARCHELON” that is coordinating the Sea turtles and “iSea” for the Chondrichthyans.
- b) **Legislation for the Establishment and the license to operate the First Aid Centers and Stations for the Care of Wild Animals** in Greece (Official Gazette 4744/B/8-9-2022).
- c) **Under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment and NECCA the National Databank for Marine Species Population Monitoring and Strandings is designed and is planned to become operated until 2026.** The databank will be a digitized and georeferenced tool available to the scientific community and related researchers.
- d) **The implementation of the Action Plan for the mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) (Official Gazette 05100/B/10-9-2024) and two cetaceans (*Tursiops truncatus* and *Phocoena phocoena*) (Official Gazette 73/B/17-1-2025)** of the Ministry of Environment and Energy are now signed by Joint Ministerial Decisions and are into force.
- e) **The LIFE MareNatura project (July 2023 – June 2029) aims to mitigate the threats that affect nine (9) of the most threatened EU priority species of seabirds, marine turtles and marine mammals.** These species are the Mediterranean Monk seal, the Loggerhead turtle, the Green turtle, the Sperm whale, the Harbour porpoise, the Cuvier's beaked whale, the Common dolphin, the Yelkouan shearwater and the Audouin's gull.

So far, most of the conservation efforts have targeted the breeding areas of these species and thus their offshore habitats (feeding grounds, congregation sites and migration corridors) remained to a large degree unexplored. The goal of the **LIFE MareNatura Project** is to significantly contribute to the conservation of these offshore habitats, through the identification of biodiversity hotspots in the Ionian, Southern Adriatic and Aegean Seas, strongholds of the target species populations, by employing a massive multidisciplinary survey effort through innovative technologies and methods. The project LIFE22-NAT-EL-101113792 (<https://www.lifemarenatura.eu/en/>) “**Conservation of priority species of marine megafauna in Greece and Italy**” – **LIFE MareNatura** is implemented with the contribution of 75% of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Commission and the co-financing of the A.G. Leventis Foundation. There are 14 partners that implement the project.

**f) ENLARGEMENT OF THE MARINE PROTECTED AREAS’ NETWORK OF GREECE TO MEET THE 30% TARGET.**

Marine protected areas (MPAs) in Greece currently occupy an area of 22,796 km and cover 18.3% of the country’s marine waters. According to par. 1 of Art. 174 of Law 5037/2023, MPAs have to expand to 30% of Greek territorial waters by 2030. To meet this target, Greece intends to establish two additional marine national parks (as per point a, par. 2 of Art. 19 of Law 1650/1986) covering OVER 32%.

IMPLEMENTING BODY/BENEFICIARY: NECCA

AREA: Mediterranean Sea (Ionian and Aegean Sea)

BUDGET: statutory measure + €10,707,187.54 from EU funds (LIFE program) & Green Fund.

- i. **THE AEGEAN MARINE NATIONAL PARK** with a total area of over 8,000 km (including the existing Natura 2000 areas of 545 km<sup>2</sup>). The park covers 6.61% of Greek territorial waters, (a net increase of Greek MPAs of over 6%). The core of the marine park is the small rocky islets, almost all of them being already designated as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and the surrounding marine environment. It builds on 13 existing Natura 2000 areas (GR3000011, GR4210011, GR4220007, GR4220030, GR4220023, GR4210009, GR4210022, GR4210007, GR4210032, GR4210023, GR4220022, GR4220036 and GR4210021) to expand the protection towards the sea. The main objective is to protect the wild birds that are in abundance in the area, i.e. sea birds such as *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*, *Larus audouinii* and *Calonectris diomedea* as well as *Puffinus yelkouan* that use the sea as a feeding ground. In most of the islets there are also colonies of *Falco eleonora*, whereas in Antimilos the *Aquila fasciata* is reproduced. The islets of the proposed park is also used by many migratory bird species for food and as a resting station during the spring and autumn migration. Furthermore, there is significant presence of seals *Monachus monachus* as well as dolphins such as *Delphinus delphis* and *Tursiops truncatus*, whereas, at deeper waters, there are cetaceans such as *Physeter macrocephalus*, *Stenella coeruleoalba* and *Ziphius cavirostris*.
  - ii. **THE IONIAN MARINE NATIONAL PARK** (from north of Kefallonia to south of Antikythira) with a total area of over 14,000 km<sup>2</sup> (including the existing Natura 2000 areas of 3,668.86 km<sup>2</sup>). The park covers over 11% of Greek territorial waters, the Ionian segment of the Hellenic trench being its core (a net increase of Greek MPAs of more than 8%) building on 13 existing Natura 2000 areas (GR2220003, GR2220004, GR2220005, GR2220007, GR2210001, GR2210002, GR2210004, GR2550010, GR2330008, GR2540009, GR2540003, GR3000008 and GR3000019).  
The park is established because the area is very important for marine mammals such as *Physeter macrocephalus*, *Ziphius cavirostris* and *Stenella coeruleoalba*. Furthermore, there is significant presence of seals *Monachus monachus* as well as dolphins *Grampus griseus*, *Delphinus delphis* and *Tursiops truncatus*. The area includes one of the most important areas for the nesting of *Caretta caretta*, areas with *Posidonia oceanica* and *Cystoseira* sp. as well as the natural habitat type of reefs. In deep waters, there are also coral formations and deep-sea corals are marine biogenic habitats of high conservation value of the country’s territorial waters.
2. **ESTABLISH MONITORING AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR PASSING BY SHIPS TO IDENTIFY ON TIME LARGE MARINE MAMMALS** so that the ships that are in the Greek territorial waters slow down and avoid collision



with them in the area between Kythira, Cape Tainaro and Cape Maleas. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ocean Care, Pelagos Cetological Research Institute and ITE-U of Crete are not developing the system **SaveWhales** a project with total cost of 3 million euros.

3. **MARINE HABITAT MAPPING OF THE GREEK MARINE PROTECTED AREAS** is an essential tool to gain a holistic representation of marine ecosystems and their distribution patterns and status, to design effective monitoring programmes and to deliver accurate and extensive on marine spatial planning, whilst to support policies on scaling up blue economy activities and simultaneously protecting and restoring marine protected areas. Marine habitat mapping in Greece involves all MPAs of the country that are included in the EU Natura 2000 network, 118 in total, covering 18.3% of the country's marine waters.
4. The Ministry of Environment and Energy (MEEN) has commissioned the preparation of **23 Special Studies Plans (SSPs) and Management Plans (MPs) for the 446 areas of the country's Natura 2000 network**, divided into 11 groups of areas. The project envisages the demarcation and institutionalization of classified protection zones of Natura 2000 areas and corresponding conditions and restrictions on land uses and the exercise of activities, with multiple benefits both in terms of the protection of the natural environment and the development of the country. The SSPs will indicate the zones and permitted land uses within their boundaries, in relation to the protected species and habitats of each group of areas and in harmony with the anthropogenic activities of the wider area. The Management Plans will allow the establishment of rules for the exercise of permitted anthropogenic activities in the study areas. The project of preparing EPMs, PDs and Management Plans for areas of the Natura 2000 Network, which is being implemented for the first time in our country, is extremely important both for the protection of our natural environment and in relation to Greece's obligations towards in the European Union. For the implementation of the SSPs project, the Ministry of Natural Environment and Biodiversity (Directorate of Natural Environment and Biodiversity Management / Department of Protected Areas, as the managing agency) assigned the project to private researchers through relevant contracts, after an open international competition. 23 SSPs had been under open consultation and are expecting the Ministerial Decrees.

**REPORT OF THE 5<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE LONG-TERM MONITORING PROGRAMME CONTACT GROUP**  
**ONLINE – 1<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2025 | 10:00 – 12:00 CET**

The Fifth Meeting of the Long-Term Monitoring Programme (LTMP) Contact Group was held online on **1 October 2025, from 10:00 to 12:00 CET**. A total of 23 members from 16 countries participated in the meeting. The list of participants is [annexed](#) to this report.

The primary objective of this meeting was to provide an update on the progress made in the development of the **second edition of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI-II)** since the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group (April 2025) and to collect the most recent information on the ASI-II development at the national levels, gathering input from each participating country of the ACCOBAMS Long-term monitoring programme contact group.

## **I. OPENING AND PRESENTATION OF PROGRESS**

1. Mrs. Maylis Salivas, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and presenting the agenda. She summarized the latest developments related to ASI-II since the last LTMP Contact Group meeting in April 2025. The full presentation is annexed to this report.
2. Mrs. Salivas revisited the background of ASI-II, highlighting the 8th Meeting of the Parties (MoP8) and the endorsement of Resolution 8.10, which provides the framework for the next basin-wide synoptic survey under ASI-II. She also recalled conclusions from previous LTMP Group and Bureau meetings to provide context for ongoing activities.
3. She reported on key developments within ASI-II, including the recruitment of key coordination personnel: Mrs. Julie Belmont for technical and administrative support and Mr. Panigada as ASI-II Scientific Coordinator. She introduced the new ASI-II logo and noted the successful UNOC3 ASI-II Launch Side Event held on 11 June 2025.
4. Follow-up actions with participating countries were outlined: coordination with Monaco and France to finalize MoUs and secure financial contributions (including a major financial contributions request made to the FEAMPA call in France), engagement with Italy on technical and scientific implementation, and meetings in Greece with the Directorate General and Prime Minister's Office to advance national participation. Further discussions took place with the U.S. Navy regarding their pledged financial support.
5. Coordination and fundraising efforts with private foundations were highlighted, particularly with the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation (FPA2), Audemars Watkins Foundation, and Thalassa Foundation (focused on communication and awareness activities for the later). Mrs. Salivas further noted ongoing collaborations with other partner organizations, including UNEP-MAP, SPA/RAC, and the SEMPA Project, as well as continued connection with Marine Conservation Research for the planning of boat survey operations.
6. Looking ahead, the next steps include organizing a technical workshop on ASI-II Survey Design in the MSFD sub-regions and beyond (scheduled in Milan, 5–7 November 2025) and developing a tentative retro-planning for ASI-II activities covering 2026–2028. Additionally, two side events are being prepared in conjunction with MoP9 and the Barcelona COP to further promote the programme and its outcomes.

7. In presenting the updated provisional budget, Mrs. Salivas noted that approximately €533,000 in additional funding is still required. She also stressed the risks associated with delays in securing commitments from key funding sources—particularly the French FEAMPA support—and the potential impact on operational activities, such as mobilizing boats and contracting aircraft operators in a timely manner.

8. She emphasized the need for increased financial contributions to ensure full coverage of all participating countries, noting that in-kind support alone will not be sufficient and will not allow the extension of ASI II campaigns as was possible with ASI I, stressing the importance of maintaining the synoptic objective of the initiative.

9. Dr. Simone Panigada, ASI-II Scientific Coordinator, emphasized the importance of the collaborative small team supporting ASI-II scientific activities, including coordination with the SCAN survey coordinator for planning data collection and analysis. He confirmed the commitment to a basin-wide synoptic survey using both aerial and boat surveys, building on ASI-I's successful outcomes, but also noting that the geopolitical situation is more challenging than during ASI I.

10. Dr. Panigada noted that ASI-II differs from ASI-I as several monitoring activities will be conducted directly by participating countries, making early communication essential for a shared survey design and standardized protocols. He welcomed the commitment of many countries and offered to discuss potential overlaps and synergies to achieve consistent outcomes.

## II. NATIONAL UPDATES

11. A roundtable was held, where participants were invited to share the latest updates regarding the development of ASI-II at their national level. The information provided by those present in the meeting is synthesized in the table below.

Country	Information update
Albania	<i>Absent</i>
Algeria	The representative from Algeria stated that observers from Algeria are ready to participate in the surveys and the research vessels could be used.
Bulgaria	The representative from Bulgaria at the meeting on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Water confirmed the country's financial commitment, which was undertaken at an earlier stage by Minister Yulian Popov concerning the amount of 46 500 € in total for three calendar years (for the entire duration of the project 2025-2027), payable in 3 installments of 15 500 € for each calendar year. The mechanism for contractual relations is through the conclusion and signature of a Memorandum of Understanding. The representative of Bulgaria indicated that the internal process in the Ministry of Environment and Water has not yet been completed, but it turns out that the procedure should be with a Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, which, however, is a formal procedure.
Croatia	The representative from Croatia stated there was no new developments since the previous LTMP meeting. Preparations for the national monitoring project are in progress, with field activities expected to begin in 2026.
Cyprus	The representative from Cyprus informed that Cyprus would provide an in-kind contribution through the new national cetacean survey, aligning with ASI-II objectives. This two-year project, within the framework of the MSFD cycle 2024–2029/30 and co-financed by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (2021–2027) and national resources, will include four seasonal vessel-based campaigns (most likely during 2026), applying both visual and acoustic

	methodologies. The project tender process has been launched and is currently under evaluation. The project is expected to start in early 2026.
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Absent</i>
France	The representative from France expressed appreciation to all individuals and countries that have contributed to the progress of the initiative. He raised a point regarding the theoretical scope of ASI II, emphasizing that the entire Mediterranean Sea should be considered the target area and underlined that a basin-wide survey ought to remain the ultimate objective of the project. The huge financial effort from France was highlighted.
Georgia	The representative from Georgia stated that at this stage, Georgia has no new updates since the first meeting of ASI-II. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture is currently undergoing an internal reorganisation, during which responsibilities for marine biodiversity are being clarified. Once this process is completed, the next steps for Georgia's participation in ASI-II are expected to become clearer.
<i>Greece</i>	<i>Absent</i>
Italy	<p>The representative from Italy recalled that the intention to support the ASI II project through the in-kind contribution from the Italian Ministry of the Environment (MSFD ISPRA activities) remains strong, with the Life project serving as an additional resource. Relevant areas and strata will be considered to ensure that this approach does not compromise the core objectives of either the Life or MSFD projects.</p> <p>The ISPRA tender for two aircraft has been officially issued (<a href="https://ted.europa.eu/it">https://ted.europa.eu/it</a>), with the submission deadline approaching in mid-October. The base auction prices for the tender are set at 1 100€ and 1 300 € per flight hour for the MSFD and Life areas respectively, inclusive of all expenses (fuel, taxes, pilot provisions). Following the closure of the tender, preliminary information is expected, which will inform survey design based on available flight hours. The design will aim to replicate, as closely as possible, the configuration executed in 2023.</p> <p>Regarding project team requirements, support from partners is considered crucial for the successful implementation of the next phase. A commitment to provide three observers, with all expenses covered, designated for both Life and MSFD activities is requested.</p>
Lebanon	The representative from Lebanon stated that CNRS will facilitate the obtention of permits and authorization for the survey. The scientific vessel CANA will be made available for the survey along with scientific researchers. Additionally, as the NCMS is implementing the SEMPA project, future discussions could explore the feasibility of leveraging both surveys jointly.
Libya	The representative from Libya highlighted the support of the Ministry of Environment and the country's participation in the UNEP-MAP SPA/RAC SEMPA Project, noting that training activities are currently ongoing, including components focused on cetaceans. In collaboration with WWF, IUCN Med, and SPA/RAC, 20 participants are involved in activities within a marine protected area on the west coast of Libya. The representative expressed hope to take part in future initiatives, mentioning that additional workshops are planned in Tripoli and the eastern region. Further activities targeting cetaceans and broader biodiversity are also foreseen, and the importance of strengthening connections with ACCOBAMS was underlined.
Malta	The representative from Malta stated that Malta is in the process of preparing the implementation of surveys related to cetaceans expected to be carried out in 2026. These are planned to include both vessel-based and aerial-based surveys <i>within the Fishery Management Zone and marine protected areas, and this in line with Malta's MSFD monitoring programme.</i>
Monaco	The representative from Monaco reaffirmed its commitment to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which provides funding support of 150 000 € over two years. No further updates were reported.
<i>Montenegro</i>	<i>Absent</i>

Morocco	<p>The representative from Morocco expressed Morocco's strong and continuous commitment to the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative II (ASI-II), reaffirming its active engagement in the conservation of cetaceans and its willingness to build on the achievements of ASI-I. The representative emphasized the importance of ensuring a smooth transition following the recent change in the national focal point, noting that close coordination with the predecessor is ongoing to maintain continuity and effectiveness in Morocco's participation.</p> <p>The country confirmed its full readiness to actively contribute to ASI-II. This includes the provision of scientists from the Institut National de Recherche Halieutique (INRH) to support research activities planned under the project, as well as the allocation of a dedicated research vessel for survey operations. Morocco also committed to providing administrative assistance for all necessary procedures, particularly for obtaining authorizations required for the implementation of surveys.</p> <p>It was reiterated that, in accordance with national regulations, all authorization requests must be processed through diplomatic channels, specifically via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco. This procedure is considered essential to ensure optimal inter-institutional coordination and compliance with national legal frameworks.</p> <p>Finally, Morocco reaffirmed its determination to continue working actively alongside other Parties to strengthen collective efforts for cetacean conservation in the Mediterranean region. The representative highlighted Morocco's intention to maintain its proactive role in supporting the objectives of ASI-II and contributing to the success of this basin-wide initiative.</p> <p>The official statement from the representative of Morocco in French is <a href="#">annexed</a> to this report.</p>
Portugal	<p>The representative from Portugal reported that, following the formation of a new government, plans are underway to submit a funding request for an aerial survey covering national waters and the extended ACCOBAMS area by the end of the year. The process will follow the same approach as for SCANS, with a response expected in early 2026. Coordination with the Scientific Coordinator will be carried out to design the survey and ensure it is implemented simultaneously with ASI II activities. Funding confirmation remains pending at this stage.</p>
Romania	<i>Absent</i>
Slovenia	<i>Absent</i>
Spain	<p>The representative from Spain conveyed its appreciation for the work undertaken by the Secretariat and all parties involved to date in the development of ASI2, and reports that, due to various constraints, during the summer of 2025 it was only possible to conduct the national survey in the DMLEBA area. It is anticipated that, in the summer of 2026, aerial surveys will be carried out in the DMESAL area (Strait of Gibraltar and Alboran Sea) and in the DMSUD area (Gulf of Cádiz). The estimated costs of these two national campaigns are 239 000 € and 20 000 € respectively.</p> <p>In addition, it is noted that two researchers from the MEGAMAR group of IEO-CSIC (Joan Giménez Verdugo and José Antonio Vázquez Bonales) will continue to contribute actively to the meetings and activities undertaken throughout the preparation, implementation, and completion , as in kind contribution from Spain to the ASI2</p>
Syria	<i>Absent</i>
Tunisia	<i>Absent</i>
Türkiye	<p>The representative from Türkiye reiterated its commitment stated in previous meetings, in addition to the integrated pollution monitoring program, which incorporates marine mammals and is funded through our national resources, they are also seeking to benefit from international resources related to cetacean studies. In this regard, they have submitted a project to the GEF under the GEF-8 cycle concerning the conservation of cetaceans in Turkish waters. Moreover, with the launch of our EU-funded project for the identification of potential Natura 2000 sites, they plan to carry out cetacean-related studies. Furthermore, within the scope of the GEF-7 cycle project to</p>

	be implemented in the Black Sea in cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine, we also intend to conduct activities on cetaceans. All three projects are scheduled to begin in 2026, and their outputs are expected to contribute to ASI-II. In addition, national experts and scientists will be able to provide training and participate in workshops. The outcomes of seasonal visual and acoustic surveys on cetaceans for population size estimation, carried out in Turkish waters by universities and NGOs will also contribute to ASI-II. Unlike ASI-I, they also consider that boat-based surveys within the Turkish waters of the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea are essential to obtain reliable data on especially deep-diving cetacean species. Unfortunately, since the projects have not yet started, they were unable to provide exact budget amount of our in kind contribution to ASI-II. The statement provided in Franc
Ukraine	The representative from Ukraine confirms its commitment to contribute to the ASI2 with their effort and expertise, e.g., to serve as observers for the ASI2 and to take part in planning the survey and analysis of its results; to contribute to the preparatory phase for the Black Sea surveys by exploring calibration of g(0) and supporting basin-wide passive acoustic monitoring based on transboundary cooperation. The passive acoustic monitoring based on both stationary and movable platforms may be suggested as an important part of the ASI2.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

12. Mrs. Gambin, Chair of ACCOBAMS, reiterated congratulations to the Secretariat and all partners for their efforts despite numerous challenges and encouraged them to proceed with the next steps. She also commended Dr. Panigada and Mrs. Julie Belmont for their role and reaffirmed her full availability.

13. Mrs. Salivas and Dr. Panigada closed the meeting by emphasizing the importance of full support from all partners. They reminded participants that ASI II is a collective effort across the entire ACCOBAMS area, highlighting the value of mutual support and expressed gratitude for the collaboration and dedication of all participants.

## ANNEX 1 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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## ANNEX 2 - PRESENTATION ON ASI-II DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

## BACKGROUND

## Resolution 8.10 "ACCOBAMS Long-Term Monitoring Programme"

*The ACCOBAMS Parties 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**".*

- Project finalised in 2023 by the Secretariat & Scientific Committee & technical support based on ASI legacy & post evaluation
- Project circulated to all Parties on 5/10/2023, through their National Focal Points.
- Parties were also requested to officially indicate the following, prior to 31/12/2023:
  - *To officially indicate 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;*
  - *To appoint a national representative for the LTMP Contact Group.*

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

ACCOBAMS

## THE LTMP CONTACT GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUNDING OF ASI-II

- 4 Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group in January, March and June 2024 and in April 2025.
- Main conclusions from previous **LTMP Contact Group** and **Bureau** Meetings:
  - update **the initial timeline** particularly regarding the ASI-II fieldwork (in 2026)
  - pursue the efforts of Countries and the Secretariat in seeking the necessary funding for launching the project;
  - recruit the **coordination personnel** (administrative and scientific)
  - use the *momentum* of the political context of the 2025 **UNOC** to increase visibility of ASI-II project
  - adapt **the project methodologies**, considering environmentally-friendly technologies, **and survey design**

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

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## SINCE THE LAST LTMP MEETING



**1 - Consultancy Call for ASI-II Development:** The Secretariat has launched a consultancy call for an expert to provide advisory, technical, and administrative support for the development of ASI-II early 2025

=> offer from **Ms. Julie BELMONT**, whose application meets all the requested expectations.



**2 - Call for ASI-II Scientific Coordinator:** The Secretariat has launched a call for an ASI-II Scientific Coordinator in May 2025

=> offer from **Mr. Simone PANIGADA**, whose application meets all the requested expectations.

**3 - New Logo designed:**



*5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online*

## SINCE THE LAST LTMP MEETING



### Official Launch of ASI-II during a specific Side Event at UNOC3

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – Théâtre de la Cité, Nice, France**

- highlighted the results of ASI-I and their significant impact on advancing scientific knowledge and supporting regional and national marine conservation policies (e.g., IUCN Red List, MedQSR, ECAP, and MSFD).
- provided a unique opportunity to officially announce the launch of ASI II, paving the way for additional funding and collaborations.
- was an opportunity for countries to reaffirm their commitment and to demonstrate concrete support for this priority ACCOBAMS action

*5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online*



ACCOBAMS

## SINCE THE LAST LTMP MEETING



## Official Launch of ASI-II during a specific Side Event at UNOC3

11<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – Théâtre de la Cité, Nice, France

100 participants

- UNEP-MAP
- UNEP-CMS
- IWC
- IHO
- FAO/GFCM
- SPA/RAC
- PS/ BSC
- IUCN-Med
- Italy
- Monaco
- France
- Cyprus
- Malta
- Spain
- Croatia
- Georgia
- FPA II
- IFAW
- MCR
- Biodivearth

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

ACCOBAMS

## SINCE THE LAST LTMP MEETING

## Follow up on countries commitments - Continue fundraising efforts - reinforce collaborations

## With Countries :

- Bulgaria
  - France
  - Monaco
  - Italy
  - Greece / meeting with DG
- 2 weeks ago

## With foundations :

- FPA-2
- Audemars Watkins
- Thalassa Foundation

## With other Entities :

- SPA/RAC – Capacity building
- UNEP/MAP = SEMPA project
- MCR – for boat component
- US Navy

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

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## NEXT STEPS

**Preliminary workshop to discuss ASI-II survey design for MSFD sub-regions** (5-7 November 2025, Milano, Italy)

**Tentative retroplanning to be prepared** (by early November 2025)

**Side Event during ACCOBAMS MOP9** (18-21 November 2025, Cyprus)

**Side Event during 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 24)** (December 2025, Cairo, Egypt)

**Other specific WS / LTMP Meetings will be planed after MOP9**

**ASI Steering Committee Meeting for strategic advices** (January 2026)

Further contact will be made in the upcoming weeks to complete information related to implementation aspects, including **administrative matters, research permits, and security considerations**

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

**ACCOBAMS**

## PROVISIONAL BUDGET

	Requested Amount (euros)
Funding from France (OFB)	500 000
Funding from Monaco	150 000
Funding from Italy (estimated, in kind)	600 000
Funding from Bulgaria	46 500
Funding from France (FEAMPA)	1 100 000*
Funding from US Navy	130 000*
ACCOBAMS Secretariat	240 000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2 766 500</b>

\* Response early 2026

Minimum needed for ASI-II: 3 300 000€

**Minimum still missing : 533 500€**

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

**ACCOBAMS**



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<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2 766 500</b>

\* Response early 2026

Minimum needed for ASI-II: 3 300 000€

**Minimum still missing : 533 500€**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the LTMP Contact Group – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, Online

**ANNEX 3 - STATEMENT FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF MOROCCO IN FRENCH**

C'est pour moi un grand honneur de prendre part pour la première fois aux travaux de ce groupe en tant que nouveau point focal du Maroc auprès de l'ACCOBAMS.

Je tiens à vous assurer que je m'inscris dans la continuité du travail mené par mon prédécesseur, avec lequel je continue à coordonner étroitement, afin de garantir une transition fluide et d'assurer une participation efficace du Maroc à nos efforts communs.

Le Maroc salue le lancement officiel du projet ASI-II, réaffirme son engagement fort et constant en faveur de la conservation des cétacés, et renouvelle son soutien audit projet dans la droite ligne de sa participation active au projet ASI-I.

Comme cela a été précisé lors de la précédente réunion, le Maroc :

- Réitère sa pleine disponibilité à prendre part activement à l'ASI-II;
- Confirme la mise à disposition des scientifiques de l'Institut National de Recherche Halieutique (INRH) dans la réalisation des travaux de recherche prévus dans le cadre du projet ainsi que la mise à disposition d'un navire de recherche

Apportera son appui administratif aux démarches, notamment pour l'obtention des autorisations nécessaires.

Afin d'enclencher les démarches nationales, il convient de rappeler, comme cela a été souligné lors de la précédente réunion, que les demandes d'autorisation devront impérativement transiter par la voie diplomatique, à travers le Ministère des Affaires étrangères du Royaume du Maroc. Cette procédure est essentielle pour assurer une coordination interinstitutionnelle optimale et garantir le respect de la réglementation nationale en vigueur.

Enfin, je tiens à réaffirmer la volonté du Maroc de continuer à œuvrer activement, aux côtés des autres Parties, en faveur du renforcement des efforts de conservation des cétacés.

**ANNEX I - LTMP CONTACT GROUP COMPOSITION***as of October 2025*

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