

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR BOAT SERVICES TO CONDUCT SURVEYS FOR CETACEANS, LARGE VERTEBRATES AND FLOATING MARINE LITTER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN - SUMMER 2026

Background and objectives

To strengthen the scientific foundation for cetacean conservation and support evidence-based policymaking, the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) developed the **ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI)**. This initiative aims to establish an integrated and coordinated long-term monitoring system for cetaceans in the region, supporting countries in meeting their national and international obligations, including those under EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Ecosystem Approach of regional sea conventions, and fisheries-related policies.

Implemented between 2018 and 2023, the first edition of ASI (**ASI-I**) constituted the first large-scale, coordinated survey covering the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Through a combination of aerial, vessel-based and passive acoustic monitoring, it produced essential data and delivered robust estimates of cetacean abundance and distribution, as well as on other marine megafauna and the human pressures affecting these ecosystems.

Following the positive impact of ASI-I, **ASI-II** was launched in June 2025 and will run until 2028, under the coordination of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat. Building on the achievements and lessons learned from the first phase, ASI-II aims to generate new scientifically robust data on cetaceans and associated species (e.g. sea turtles, seabirds, pelagic fish) while also assessing major anthropogenic pressures such as marine litter through its next regional synoptic survey planned during the summer 2026.

An essential component of the 2026 campaign is the implementation of **vessel-based visual and passive acoustic surveys along predefined transects**, following harmonized protocols to ensure comparability across subregions and enable joint data analysis.

In this context, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat is seeking **organisations or companies able to provide suitable research vessels and qualified crews** for the 2026 ASI II Mediterranean survey campaign. In addition to conducting the scientific surveys targeting cetaceans, large marine vertebrates and marine floating litter, selected organisations will be expected to:

- **provide onboard capacity building** for national scientists who will embark on a rotating basis, and
- **make the vessel available for communication and outreach events** organised by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat throughout the campaign.

Purpose and selection process

The purpose of this call for Expression of Interest (EOI) is to identify appropriate organizations or companies who could be selected to make offers to ACCOBAMS in view of conducting the ASI-II survey in several sub-areas of the Mediterranean during the summer 2026.

This call for EOI does not constitute an invitation to tender. Only organizations deemed qualified by ACCOBAMS will receive the invitation to tender in a second step.

Following the reception of the expressions of interest from applicant organisations, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat will assess the received proposals on the basis of the elements requested in this call, for pre-selection on a comparative basis.

Pre-selected organizations will be then contacted to submit a tender, as a result of which the ACCOBAMS Secretariat shall decide whether or not to approve the signature of a Contract or a financial Agreement.

Description of the activities expected from the selected organization(s)

The selected organization(s), working in close coordination with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, will be responsible for providing one or more suitable research vessels (as specified in Annex I) together with a qualified and experienced crew, to conduct visual and passive acoustic surveys within the designated survey blocks indicated in Annex II.

The survey design presented in Annex II is preliminary and may be revised; therefore, survey block boundaries and total track lengths are subject to modification.

The Vessel-based surveys are tentatively scheduled to take place between 15 June and 15 September 2026. The methodology will apply line transect distance sampling methods, incorporating visual observations and passive acoustic monitoring. The latter methods will be using towed arrays of hydrophones (underwater microphones) capable of detecting all species of cetacean.

Research vessels must be able to embark national scientific teams for each survey leg, on a rotating basis. These national teams will be appointed by the ACCOBAMS National Focal Points in coordination with the relevant national authorities. While participants are expected to have some relevant experience, the selected organisation will also be required to provide onboard capacity building, ensuring practical training in visual and acoustic monitoring techniques.

Additionally, during ports of call, the project will organise communication and outreach events related to ASI-II; vessels must therefore be available to support these activities.

This Call for Expression of Interest aims to gather information to refine the following elements:

- a) Availability of the organisation for the specified period, and description of the research vessel(s) proposed, including their adequacy for visual and passive acoustic surveys (as per [Annex I](#)).
- b) Availability of the captain(s) and crew, including documented experience in similar marine survey operations.
- c) Survey block(s) that the organisation proposes to cover ([Annex II](#)).
- d) A list of potential ports of call relevant for boat maintenance, crew changes, embarkation of national teams, logistics, and communication events.
- e) Budget estimates for carrying out surveys in the proposed area
- f) Relevant experience in conducting similar work, including in the Mediterranean region

Request for expression of interest

Interested aircraft companies should submit their proposal before **Friday 16th January 2026**, in French or English, by email to:

- **Ms. Maylis SALIVAS**, ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary
Email: msalivas@accobams.net

and, in copy, to :

- **Ms. Salomé CALLEY**, ACCOBAMS Project Officer
E-mail: scalley@accobams.net
- **Ms. Julie BELMONT**, ACCOBAMS Consultant in charge of ASI-II Coordination
Email : julieroxane@gmail.com

The proposal should include the following elements:

1. **A technical document**, containing:
 - a. A list of the areas/survey block(s) that the organisation proposes to cover (refer to the maps in Annex II),
 - b. A list of potential ports of call to be used,
 - c. Any relevant information on administrative procedures (e.g., permits).
 - d. **A description of the research vessel(s)** proposed for the survey (see requirements in Annex I).
 - e. **Curricula vitae of the lead crew members / captains**, highlighting experience in similar survey operations.
 - f. **A description of the organisation**, including its curriculum and documented experience in similar work, notably in:
 - marine surveys (including on cetaceans, megafauna, marine pollution)
 - scientific capacity building,
 - communication and awareness activities.
2. **A preliminary estimated budget** for the proposed survey block(s), including all costs (crew, vessel operation, and living costs/food for all teams).
Note: travel costs for national team members to/from the embarkation ports will be covered by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat.
3. **Institutional and administrative information** on the organisation (e.g., statutes, legal status, type of institution, etc.).
4. **A copy of the operating license and relevant authorizations** (as applicable), and relevant administrative documents (e.g., valid insurance certificates, Valid vessel Certificates, Confirmation of passenger licence, Crew certification) issued by the competent authorities demonstrating that the organisation is authorised to operate the research vessel.

Proposals that fail to provide the required documentation or information, or reject the terms and conditions of the Call for expression of interest may be excluded from consideration.

For additional information, clarification or any communication relating to this call for EOI, applicants may write to the following contacts:

Contacts

Maylis SALIVAS ACCOBAMS Executive Secretary 1 Promenade Honoré II MC-98000 MONACO Tel: +377 9898 8010 msalivas@accobams.net
Salomé CALLEY ACCOBAMS Project Officer scalley@accobams.net
Julie BELMONT Consultant – ASI-II Coordination julieroxane@gmail.com

ANNEX I – RESEARCH VESSEL TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Vessels must:

- hold valid certifications and appropriate insurance for professional high-sea navigation;
- comply with current safety regulations and be equipped with required onboard serviced and functioning safety equipment;
- have an observation platform providing an eye-height of at least 5 m above sea level.
- be able to closely follow predetermined survey transects with GPS end and start points, be able to determine depths and to maintain speed of 5 to 8 knots
- be able to maintain 6 / 7 knots under power and have sufficient fuel range to motor for at least 7 days.
- have a reliable autopilot able to maintain course in a range of sea states,;
- Accommodate a team of at least 10 persons for offshore navigation
- Able to stay and work offshore for 2 weeks minimum , 24hours /day.
- Have capacity to store and operates relevant acoustic monitoring system (400m Towed hydrophone array)

ANNEX II – BOAT SURVEY DESIGN

Note: Detailed maps per country can be provided upon request



