

CCB statement on the conservation of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

These are CCB proposals for action for the conservation of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise population. These actions are necessary for all EU Member States to fulfill the demands on monitoring programs and programs of measures under the MSFD, and to meet the requirements of the Habitat Directive and the HELCOM BSAP.

General

- Work for the full implementation of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan) in all ASCOBANS countries and link this work to the fulfilment of the MSFD and Habitats Directive.

Management and MPAs

- Use available information on spatial and seasonal distribution of porpoises to designate protected areas in the Baltic Sea.
- Specifically, strict protection needs to be ensured for the area around the offshore banks south of Gotland, where the Baltic Sea population reproduces.
- Create and implement relevant and effective management plans for MPAs, including bycatch mitigation measures.

Bycatch problems

- Eliminate bycatch in important harbour porpoise areas by implementing strict bycatch mitigation measures, such as time and space restrictions on fishing gear in areas with high porpoise density or occurrence and areas with high bycatch risk.
- Outside high-density / protected areas within the Baltic Proper, ensure EC regulations concerning pinger-use are effective and enforced.
- Develop pingers not audible to seals, to be available as soon as possible.
- Develop bycatch-safe fishing gear, in relation to harbour porpoise but also to seals and birds.
- Make removal of ghost nets a priority, especially in areas with high densities of porpoises, in the MSFD program of measures.
- Introduce more effective monitoring and reporting of bycatch, not only of porpoises but of all marine mammals, sea birds and protected fish species. Continue the development and evaluation of automatic surveillance of bycatch, for example using CCTV.

Monitoring

- Develop and implement a transnational longterm monitoring program for the status of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise population, including monitoring both within and outside MPAs. This monitoring should satisfy the demands of reporting for both the MSFD and the Habitats Directive.
- Set up a Baltic Sea regional public system for simple reporting of porpoise sightings, e.g. organized within HELCOM, and ensure data are publicly available.

Noise

- Establish regional recommendations for reduction of underwater noise and include mitigation in MSFD program of measures.
- Ensure noise generating activities are restricted and that EIAs are required for all such activities.
- Ensure that existing mitigation methods are used to minimize the impact on harbour porpoises.
- Work towards increasing awareness of leisure boat owners of the impact noise generated by such boats can have on porpoise as well as other marine life.
- Urge all sonar manufacturers and users to stop using frequencies below 150 kHz, and ban such frequencies if voluntary measures are insufficient.