



**ACCOBAMS report to the 44<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UNEP/CMS Standing Committee**

**Bonn, 14-15 October 2015**

*Prepared by the ACCOBAMS Permanent Secretariat*

This report to the 44<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee provides a summary of actions taken by the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) since COP11.

**I. MANAGEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT**

***1.1 - Administrative matters***

As of October 2015, there are 23 **State Parties** to the Agreement: Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

Montenegro has recently deposited its acceptance instrument on the amendment **for the extension of the ACCOBAMS** to cover the Atlantic EEZ of Spain and Portugal.

A revision of the **Host Country Agreement** was drafted and is currently under review in the Monaco Government services. It includes a transparent process for the recruitment of the Executive Secretary, which will remain sponsored by the Principality of Monaco.

**Staff regulations** were also drafted and will be ready for the next triennium.

***1.2 - Regular communication***

1. **The 5th regional workshop on Cetacean Conservation in South Mediterranean Countries** was held in Menton in April 2015;

Parties reiterated their interest regarding the organization of Regional Workshops in order to evaluate and facilitate the implementation of the Agreement.

The objective of these workshops is to assist the Secretariat in the preparation of the work program for the coming triennium, by identifying priorities of each sub-region and to improve the conservation status of cetaceans and of their habitat in the Agreement area.

2. **FINS newsletter** n°6 was published in January 2015. Next issue is in preparation through the coordination of the Chair of the Scientific Committee.

3. The ACCOBAMS communication database was integrated in a more global tool: the Network on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (NETCCOBAMS: [www.netccobams.com](http://www.netccobams.com)).

NETCCOBAMS will provide the opportunity to relevant experts to discuss the best approaches and priority actions for a better knowledge of cetacean populations in sub regions of the ACCOBAMS area and to exchange their experience and their data.

Through the dedicated website, which include a communication database, a geoportal and a forum, experts will be able to:

- Consult and find projects in the ACCOBAMS area,
- Meet and chat with other colleagues,
- Share files and experiences,
- Keep updated.

#### 4. ***Photo exhibition***

The Secretariat organized of a Photo exhibition in Monaco (20 April-8 June 2015) to promote ACCOBAMS activities and the collaboration with its Partners and with the Government of the Principality of Monaco.

During this event, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat launched the first ACCOBAMS Cetaceans Day in Monaco at the occasion of the World Day for environment (5 June 2015).

5. A **workshop** on “Strengthening the cooperation for a better cetacean conservation in the ACCOBAMS area: working together with common tools” was organized during the 2015 ECS Conference (21 March 2015, Malta), underlining the:

- Importance of the participation of all experts working on the cetacean conservation;
- Importance of the involvement of NGOs, especially of all the ACCOBAMS Partners;
- Importance of capacity building activities, such as trainings, workshops, transboundary initiatives between ACCOBAMS Partners; Intercet platform is a good example of common tool that could be used easily in the entire ACCOBAMS Area;
- Importance of opportunistic cetaceans’ research activities for the improvement of knowledge regarding cetacean distribution and the dissemination of the results of such opportunistic surveys.

### ***1.3 – Cooperation with international organizations***

1. The ACCOBAMS Secretariat has been significantly increasing its collaboration with **other relevant international organizations** (CMS Family, CBD, Barcelona Convention, Bern Convention, Bucharest Convention, GFCM, IWC, IUCN...), in particular by having the outputs of its work programme integrated into their initiatives.

A revision of the MOU between ACCOBAMS and RAC/SPA was signed in January 2015 « Establishing the joint program for 2014-2016 ».

A MOU between ACCOBAMS and UNEP/MAP is under finalization. Signature planned at Barcelona Convention COP19 in February 2016.

2. In a joint meeting, organised in June 2015 in Tunisia, was launched the drafting of a Common strategy through GFCM, RAC/SPA and ACCOBAMS, IUCN in collaboration with MedPAN (in the framework of in the UNEP/MAP EcAp Project). This strategy was particularly focused on spatial based and conservation measures related the high and deep Mediterranean waters. It will be presented to the Barcelona Convention COP19.

3. The collaboration with ASCOBANS is still ongoing, in particular in the noise working group for the implementation of Descriptor 11 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). In addition, the ACCOBAMS joined the ASCOBANS in the call (in preparation) for developing Guidelines on environmental impact assessment for noise-generating offshore industries under the CMS Champion Programme (thanks to the generosity of the Principality of Monaco).

## **II. CONSERVATION ACTIONS**

### ***II.1 - Improve knowledge about state of cetaceans***

**Cetacean population estimates and distribution:** The "ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative" project consists of carrying out a study of (1) the abundance of cetaceans and (2) their geographical distribution, following a survey to be carried out on one occasion, in the whole Agreement area. The study would bring together visual survey methods (1) by boat, (2) by air, and (3) using acoustic detection techniques. The survey initiative is still in preparation. The secretariat is currently contacting directly the Relevant Contracting parties Ministries in order to get their formal involvement in the project( for additional information, please refer to the Project Identification Document in Annex 1).

### ***II.2 - Reduce human pressures on cetaceans***

#### **Mitigation of the impacts of fishing activities:**

In Barcelona, in September 2015, a common Training workshop was organized jointly by ACCOBAMS and the GFCM on Technical measures to mitigate interactions of endangered species with Fisheries and to reduce post-capture mortality focused on regarding marine species. It involved national coordinators and international experts.

The financial agreement between the MAVA Foundation and the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, related to the ACCOBAMS/GFCM 2-year project (2015-2016) on mitigating the impact of fishing activities on endangered species, was signed on February 2015. The project kick-off meeting was held on 7 and 8 April 2015 in Tunis with the participation of all the national partners involved in the project.

#### **1. Anthropogenic noise:**

The Secretariat of ACCOBAMS, in accordance with the Secretariat of the UNEP/MAP, launched a study

to develop a basin-wide strategy for underwater noise monitoring in the Mediterranean. The technical guidance was developed by members of the Joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS/CMS Noise Working Group (JNWG). This document outlines the importance of assessing and monitoring underwater noise in the Mediterranean Sea, and discusses the issues related to the choice of indicators currently proposed for the implementation of Descriptor 11 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), with a view to propose adaptations to the Mediterranean case, whenever possible. The proposed monitoring strategy, which was presented at a Meeting of the Integrated Monitoring Correspondence Group (Athens, Greece, 30 March-1 April 2015), brings forward the work carried out so far by UNEP/MAP, in coherence with other international legal frameworks operating in the area (such as ACCOBAMS and the European Union Directives). It is now included in the UNEP/MAP "Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme". The Cluster encouraged further work on collaboration especially with MEDPOL.

## **2. Ecosystem Approach (EcAp)**

The last meeting of the Ecosystem Approach Coordination Group (Rome, Italy, 14-15 September 2015), under the umbrella of the Barcelona Convention, endorsed the draft Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (draft IMAP) that includes:

- Methodological elements for cetaceans monitoring based on ACCOBAMS recommendations for the EO1 on "Biodiversity";
- The two candidate indicators for noise monitoring that were elaborated by the ACCOBAMS Secretariat for the EO 11 on "Energy including underwater Noise".

The draft IMAP will be then presented at the forthcoming Meeting of the MAP Focal Points, and then adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at their next Conference in February 2016.

## **3. Commercial Cetacean watching:**

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat is the owner of the logo "High Quality Whale Watching". It has been registered at the WOPI. ACCOBAMS will manage its use through the regulations governing the use of collective certification brands.

A MOU was signed with the Pelagos Permanent Secretariat for the management of the "High Quality Whale Watching" label in the Pelagos zone.

For France and Monaco, the label is granted through NGOs respectively "souffleurs d'écume" and "Association Monégasque pour la Protection de la Nature".

## **4. Cetaceans in captivity:**

The Scientific Committee and the Bureau Meeting advised the Secretariat to approach Countries with dolphinariums, which could potentially endorse the presentation of a Recommendation establishment an individual identification system(s) of cetaceans kept in captivity was needed, in order to be presented by one (or more) ACCOBAMS Party to the next CITES COP in 2016.

## **5. Species conservation plans:**

The ACCOBAMS Secretariat assisted the Mediterranean Action Plan RAC/SPA in the revision of the **Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans** in the Mediterranean Sea and together with defining a

work program and a relevant schedule. This revision concern the Parties of the Barcelona Convention Protocol related to SPA and biodiversity not Parties to ACCOBAMS. It was presented to the RAC/SPA Focal Points Meeting in April 2015 and will be on table of the next Conference of the Barcelona Convention Parties in February 2016.

### ***II.3 - Improve Communication, Awareness and Capacity Building***

#### **1. Functional stranding networks and responses to emergency situation:**

Further to the workshop on cetacean live stranding organized in October 2014, the ACCOBAMS secretariat submit to the RAMOGE Agreement the elements for a reflexion on how to consider the managements of carcasses or quite dead big cetaceans offshore transboundary drifting.

#### **2. Cetacean conservation and postgraduate programmes:**

The Secretariat informed the participants that he " **The Master teaching Module on cetacean conservation** " it has been implemented in English speaking universities; in Malta University in March 2015 and it is planned to be teach in Black Sea in November 2015.

**3. Training on photo identification** through the use of Intercet, a Web-GIS platform designed to support collection and integrated analysis of geo-referred and photographic data (ECS Workshop, 21 March 2015 –Malta). An important tool for the Bottlenose Dolphin Conservation Plan.

### ***II. 4 - Enhance effective conservation of cetaceans critical habitats***

#### **1. Protected areas for cetaceans:**

Currently, the Guidelines for the "Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans" are under review. A draft manual for evaluation of effectiveness of MPAs for cetaceans as well as other spatial conservation tools for IMMAs and for other areas containing resources for cetaceans (e.g. GFCM/FRAs) was prepared for comment at the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Scientific Committee.

2. In the framework of a joint Meeting ACCOBAMS, RAC/SPA, GFCM on Marine Areas for Protection a **workshop on "the effectiveness of protected areas containing critical habitats for cetaceans"** was organized by ACCOBAMS, in June 2015, in Gammarth, Tunisia. The join meeting aimed at (i) updating the list of Marine Areas of protection in the ACCOBAMS area, including Cetacean Critical Habitats, (ii) initiating the review of Guidelines for the management of Marine Areas of protection including Cetacean Critical Habitat in order to be able, in the next triennium, to evaluate the management effectiveness of these areas, and (iii) establishing relevant recommendations in Marine Areas of protection including Cetacean Critical Habitats.

The joint meeting discussed also the opportunity to harmonize the wording related to the "Marine Mammals' Critical Habitats" (MMCH) and the "Cetaceans' Critical Habitats" (CCH).

## **Annex 1**

### **ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative**

#### ***Project Identification Document***

*Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone Atlantique adjacente*



*Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area*

# ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative

## Project Identification Document

Prepared by: EMC2I-Hervé Lethier

In collaboration with:

The Agence des aires marines protégées  
The Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas  
The International Union for Conservation of Nature



## BACKGROUND

Since 2003, the ACCOBAMS **Scientific Committee** has worked to develop the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative, a programme to study the abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea/Black Sea.

For this purpose, a **Working Group** was set up within the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee; this group met for an initial scientific workshop in December 2004 (Spain), then for a seminar in September 2005 (Scotland). In May 2008, a scientific workshop (Monaco) reviewed a project document which was subsequently presented to the ACCOBAMS Contracting Parties during their Fourth meeting in 2010 (Monaco, 9–12 November).<sup>1</sup>

A scientific workshop was organised in November 2011 (ISPRA, Rome) to update the project document, and, more specifically, its “aerial survey” component. The updated project document was officially endorsed by the Scientific Committee in 2012, during its Eighth Meeting (Monaco, 13–15 November).<sup>2</sup>

In November 2013, the Parties to ACCOBAMS adopted Resolution 5.9<sup>3</sup> and committed to promoting the project at the national and international levels, and to carrying it out as soon as possible.

A **Steering Committee**, benefiting from external support, was set up in 2014 with a view to initiating the process of seeking funds to implement the project. The Committee, which was placed under the supervision of the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, brought together representatives from the Marine Protected Area Agency (France), the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, and the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (UNEP/MAP).

In addition, on the basis of the provisions of Resolution 5.9, in order to support the project’s development and ensure the countries’ involvement, the ACCOBAMS Secretariat established a **Contact Group** made up of country representatives (from both Parties to ACCOBAMS and Range States – see Annex 1) and the “Survey” Task Manager of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.<sup>4</sup>

The Contact Group was given the role of providing the information required to develop the project and monitoring the preparation of project documents and work to seek financing.

Consequently, this document is the result of the work of the Scientific Committee, the discussions within the Steering Committee and the Contact Group, and a series of consultations carried out during 2014 with Parties to the Agreement, Range States<sup>5</sup>, partners and potential external sponsors.

It draws in particular on the views and comments of the Parties and Range States gathered by means of a semi-structured questionnaire sent to national contact persons. All countries which responded to this consultation process (20 countries as of 21 January 2015) confirmed their keen interest in the project and their adherence to the goals and objectives listed below.

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<sup>1</sup> Document ACCOBAMS-MOP4/2010/Doc 25

<sup>2</sup> Rec. 8.1.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 5.9 Comprehensive Cetacean Population Estimates and Distribution in the ACCOBAMS Area (ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative).

<sup>4</sup> i.e. the task manager for cetacean population estimates (basin-wide survey), Mr Simone Panigada.

<sup>5</sup> ACCOBAMS, article I, para. 3: “any State that exercises sovereignty and/or jurisdiction over any part of the range of a cetacean population covered by this Agreement, or a State, flag vessels of which are engaged in activities in the Agreement area which may affect the conservation of cetaceans.”



## I BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

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### I.1 Context and issues

The Mediterranean/Black Sea region is indisputably a global biodiversity hotspot; the richness and diversity of its marine wildlife, in particular, are exceptional.

The region, which accounts for just 1% of the planet's oceans, regularly or occasionally, plays host to more than 20 species of cetacean, around half of which are considered to be endangered and are protected by international and Community law. It is also a very important region for numerous species of birds and reptiles, which are also under threat.

Here, these species find the natural and semi-natural habitats essential to their biological cycles.

Under significant pressure from human activities, they receive ongoing attention from the States Parties to ACCOBAMS, who are keen to better coordinate their activities in support of these species in the future. The aim is to reach or maintain good conservation status with respect to these species and their critical and preferred habitats and, by so doing, to contribute to the good environmental status of the marine<sup>6</sup> and coastal environment, at the ecologically coherent level of the Mediterranean Sea/Black Sea macroregion.<sup>7</sup>

The challenge is to create a *"baseline framework"*<sup>8</sup> to consolidate understanding of the abundance and distribution of species and to regularly monitor trends in their development; it also meets the objective of implementing national and regional policies based on a good understanding of the status of the environment within the context of socioeconomic development which is compatible with the long-term conservation of the species in question and address the imperatives of adapting to climate change.<sup>9</sup>

The protection of this natural asset and the associated environmental goods and services is far from assured. There are several main reasons for this:

- **the absence of a regional vision for conserving these species:** in both the north and south of the region, not all countries currently have in place programmes and/or projects to survey and monitor the species concerned. Moreover, some of these species are migratory and move within the region throughout the year. Where such programmes do exist, they are at best national, or they cover only part of a country's marine and coastal territory; this situation is not conducive to optimising the efforts undertaken by the countries concerned to best meet their international<sup>10</sup> and/or European Community<sup>11</sup> obligations, nor to defining a macroregional strategy adapted to the eco-ethology of species, which is required to achieve the objective of good environmental status in marine and coastal environments;
- **a failure to capitalise on and optimise current measures to protect species and their habitats:** in the absence of an integrated and coordinated transnational programme at the ecoregional level, it is currently difficult to assess the impact of protection measures, including national/regional measures, adopted to support these species and their habitats, and to prioritise the additional measures necessary to maintain or restore their good conservation status;

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<sup>6</sup> The good environmental status of the marine environment entails the conservation of biodiversity, including a distribution and abundance of species adapted to the existing physiographic, geographic and climatic conditions, as well as the number and quality of their habitats.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. UNEP(DEPI)MED IG.21/9 and Decision IG.21/3, in particular operational objective 1.3 and Target 2.

<sup>8</sup> Within the meaning of the 7th European Union Environment Action Programme.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. in particular: ACCOBAMS, 2014 – Report of the ACCOBAMS expert workshop on the impact of climate change on cetaceans of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, Monaco, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

<sup>10</sup> E.g.: Convention on Biological Diversity, the Mediterranean Action Plan's *"Ecosystem Approach"* – EcAp process (2008).

<sup>11</sup> Including in sectoral policies such as fisheries (cf. COM(2008) 187 final – Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament [SEC(2008) 449], dated 11 April 2008, on the role of the CFP in implementing an ecosystem approach to marine management.

- **insufficient level of knowledge:** there is scant data available on the abundance and distribution of the species concerned and their critical and preferred habitats. Moreover, the data available is gathered using different methods and protocols in different countries, and cannot always be aggregated; equally, there is insufficient time series data to enable an assessment of the conservation status of these species, in the absence of an appropriate baseline framework;
- **a lack of understanding of socioeconomic activities and habits:** activities and habits relating to the sea and the coastline are a threat to the species and their marine and coastal habitats and have an impact on the conservation of this natural asset, the nature and significance of which are not completely understood. Disruption is caused by activities linked to tourism, fishing, transport and shipping, to name but a few. The definition of “*smart*” growth, which is required in order to conserve species and their most critical and preferred habitats (migration and movement patterns, areas of concentration, hibernation, feeding, reproduction, etc.), demands the establishment of reliable, robust and detailed baseline data, enabling the impacts of these anthropogenic pressures on the species in question to be better assessed, and retroactive measures taken in order to minimise them.

## 1.2 Project objectives

The project forms part of the commitments made by the Parties to ACCOBAMS<sup>12</sup> on the conservation of cetaceans (general objective B of the ACCOBAMS Strategy) and aims to respond to the ACCOBAMS strategic objective (B.1.1) on improving understanding of the conservation status of cetaceans:

- in the Mediterranean Sea (Actions B.1.1.1 and B.1.1.2);
- in the Black Sea (Action B.1.1.3).

It is a pilot project at this macroregional level, and the overall objective is to ensure that public and private stakeholders in the Mediterranean/Black Sea region “***have a coherent monitoring system for the species concerned in the Mediterranean/Black Sea ecoregion<sup>13</sup>, based on objective, robust and comparable data, with a view to improving the conservation status of these species and their habitats through appropriate management for the good status of the marine and coastal environments in the area of the study.***”<sup>14</sup>

The specific objectives of the project are to contribute primarily to:

- providing a deeper understanding of the abundance and distribution of the species in question at the Mediterranean Sea/Black Sea macroregional level, based on undisputed data;<sup>15</sup>
- strengthening international cooperation and synergies between the countries of the macroregion to optimise and increase the efficiency of their efforts to establish a transnational approach to conserving the species concerned;
- characterising the good environmental status of the study zone;
- maintaining and/or restoring this good status as well as the critical and preferred habitats of the species in question, both marine and coastal;
- progressing research/development in this field;
- providing guidance on the measures required to adapt to climate change.

<sup>12</sup> In particular, Resolution 5.1 “ACCOBAMS Strategy (2014–2025)”, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> UNEP(DEPI)/MED Decision IG.21/3 on the ecosystem approach (operational objectives 1.2 and 1.3) and § 2

<sup>14</sup> Annex III (table 1 – biological features) to the MSFD.

<sup>15</sup> Annex I – § 1 to the MSFD.

The project will also meet the priorities of the action plans for the conservation of **cetaceans, sea turtles and birds** in the Mediterranean Sea, adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 1991<sup>16</sup>, 1999<sup>17</sup> and 2003<sup>18</sup> respectively, and the relevant recommendations of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) on reducing the number of accidental captures of cetaceans, seabirds and turtles in the GFCM's area of competence.<sup>19</sup>

It will contribute to the efforts being undertaken by States in the Mediterranean Sea/Black Sea macroregion to meet their international commitments with respect to biological diversity<sup>20</sup>, including the Aichi Targets<sup>21</sup>, and those linked to conserving wildlife and the natural environment in Europe.<sup>22</sup>

The Parties to the Convention on the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the Black Sea will find here concrete and operational responses to their decisions regarding the conservation of biodiversity in the Black Sea.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the project will provide essential support to members of the European Union in protecting wildlife species of Community interest and their habitats and types of natural and semi-natural habitats<sup>24</sup>, and from the point of view of maintaining or restoring the good status of marine and coastal environments.<sup>25</sup>

### **I.3 Project content**

To meet the objectives outlined above, the project comprises **three (3) components**, whose activities will take place during the period 2016–2019.

#### **COMPONENT 1 – BETTER UNDERSTAND AND MONITOR THE CONSERVATION STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF CETACEANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN/BLACK SEA MACROREGION**

##### Expected results:

- a **detailed review** (1) of the survey and monitoring work, methods and available data for the species concerned in the macroregion; (2) an assessment of their compatibility and complementarity; and (3) a characterisation of current gaps;
- a **standardised operational method** to survey and to monitor the species in question at the macroregional level;
- a **baseline** which will enable regular monitoring of development trends for these species and meets the need for ongoing monitoring using an ecosystem approach<sup>26</sup>; this baseline and the trends

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<sup>16</sup> UNEP/MAP/RAC SPA, not dated – Action Plan for the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea, 8 p. (§ 10 in particular, bullet 6) and the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (cf. the seven points set out to achieve this – SAP BIO, 14 November 2003).

<sup>17</sup> UNEP/MAP/RAC SPA, 1989 – Action Plan for the Conservation of Mediterranean Sea Turtles (rev. 1999).

<sup>18</sup> UNEP/MAP/RAC SPA, 2003 – Action Plan for the Conservation of Birds Listed in Annex II of the SPA/BD Protocol.

<sup>19</sup> Recommendations GFCM/36/2012/2, GFCM/35/2011/2, GFCM/35/2011/3.

<sup>20</sup> Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020.

<sup>21</sup> By contributing, in particular, to the achievement of Targets 1, 3, 5, 13–15, 17 and 19.

<sup>22</sup> Particularly Annex II to the Convention.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also the objective “*EcoQO 2: Conservation of Black Sea Biodiversity and Habitats*” of the Strategic Action Plan adopted by the Parties (Sofia, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC, dated 21 May 1992, on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Annex II in particular).

<sup>25</sup> Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (on this subject, see the five revisable elements of the plan of action for the marine environment adopted by the member countries and qualitative descriptor 1 – biological diversity – for determining good environmental status in the marine environment).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ongoing integrated monitoring programme currently being developed as part of the process of implementing the ecosystem approach (cetaceans are used as indicators for Ecological Objective 1 relating to biodiversity – Decision IG.21/3 adopted by COP 18

observed will also help with regular assessment of the conservation status of biodiversity in the macroregion and with updating the red lists, including the IUCN red list, of endangered species and ecosystems, and the Green List of Protected Areas;

- an **information management system** for data on the species concerned in the macroregion, which is unique, coherent, innovative and integrated; meets international standards<sup>27</sup>; and can be replicated in other ecoregional environments;
- **preliminary identification** and **description** of the principal habitats and types of critical and preferred habitats of the species in question.

#### Main activities:

- **activity 1:** detailed review of survey and monitoring operations carried out to date and scheduled to be conducted during the lifecycle of the project; comparative analysis of methods and protocols used, recommendations to improve regional coordination<sup>28</sup> (first half of 2016);
- **activity 2:** gap analysis by geographical subregion, evaluation of the cost of operations, institutional set-up, seeking of additional financing (first half of 2016);
- **activity 3:** finalisation of operational method for standardised survey, adjustment of protocols by survey block, administrative and logistical preparation for field operations, preliminary verification study (first and second halves of 2016);
- **activity 4:** pre-planning study for an information management system for data gathered during the survey exercise and in the medium and long terms (second half of 2016);
- **activity 5:** implementation of the survey coordinated by geographic sector (10 sectors – cf. Map 1), conducted using the standardised method with a view to establishing a baseline status at the macroregional level (first half of 2017);<sup>29</sup>

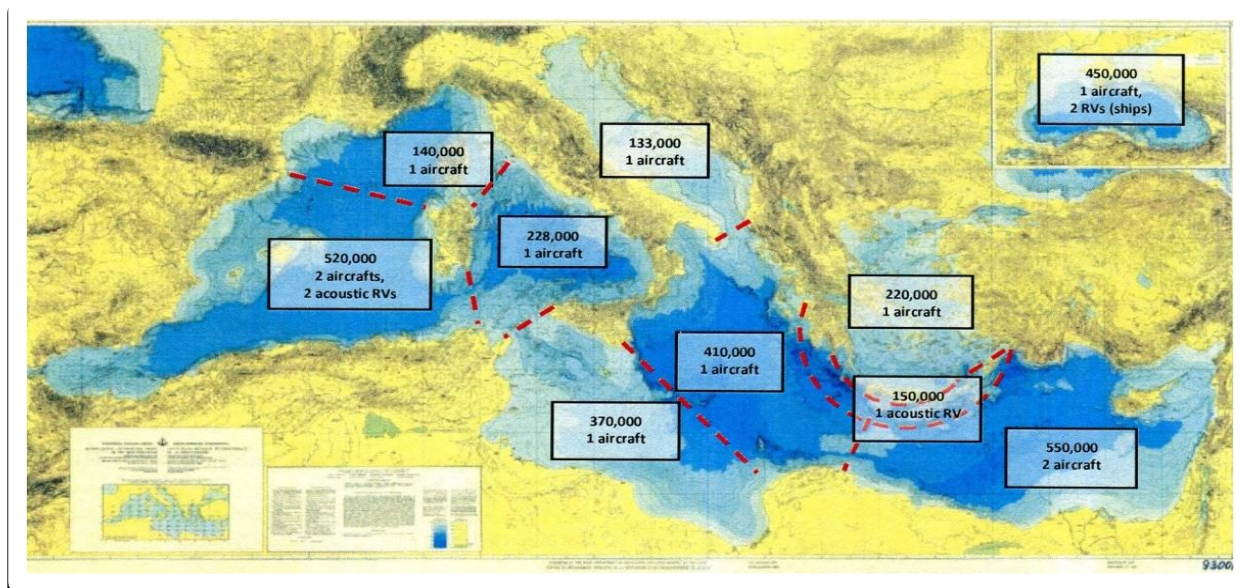
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of the Barcelona Convention).

<sup>27</sup> Cf., in particular, COM 2010/477EU dated 1 September 2010, SC7\_Doc 29.annex9 (*Criteria and methodological standards relevant to ACCOBAMS on good environmental status of marine waters*) and work in progress on the MSFD by the joint ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS working group.

<sup>28</sup> This examination should help to optimise the efforts already undertaken by States Parties to improve understanding of the conservation status of the species in question and to meet their international and – in the case of members of the European Union – Community commitments; it should lead to a reduction in the cost of the survey exercise and ongoing monitoring of the species concerned. Finally, it should also reinforce the Euro-Mediterranean partnership on environmental issues. To this end, approval of the project as part of this partnership will be sought.

<sup>29</sup> Survey combining visual survey methods by boat, by air, and using acoustic detection techniques.



Map 1 – Survey and monitoring sectors and estimated resources required (Source, ASI 2011).

## COMPONENT 2 – OPTIMISE EFFORTS TO MANAGE AND CONSERVE THE SPECIES IN QUESTION AND THEIR MARINE AND COASTAL HABITATS

### Expected results:

- an **improved understanding** of the impacts of the main human pressures on the conservation status of the species in question and their development trends, and how the environment in general, and specifically the ecosystems to which these species belong and their habitats, respond to these impacts;
- an **assessment of the effectiveness of protection measures** and other responses, including national/regional, adopted to support these species and their habitats;
- **technical recommendations** to improve (1) the conservation of the species concerned and their critical and preferred habitats, (2) the management of national and transnational protected areas dedicated to the conservation of these species and (3) recommendations to reinforce protection measures for the species in question and their habitats, including by extending the network of marine and coastal protected areas in the macroregion, as well as improving national, Community and international regulations.

### Main activities:

- **activity 6:** analysis of the results of the survey (abundance and distribution of species), and establishing links with the main anthropogenic pressures and protection measures, including national/regional measures (second half of 2017 and first half of 2018);
- **activity 7:** identification, characterisation and location of critical and preferred habitats, with a view to protecting them (second half of 2018);
- **activity 8:** drawing up of concrete recommendations to optimise existing measures to protect the species concerned and prioritisation of actions to be taken at all levels: national, subregional and macroregional (first half of 2019).

## COMPONENT 3 – REINFORCE LOCAL CAPACITIES TO CONSERVE CETACEANS AND ENSURE THE GOOD STATUS OF MARINE AND COASTAL ENVIRONMENTS

Expected results:

- a **reinforcement of the network** of experts, specialists and other local stakeholders helping to conserve the species in question;
- the **development of the human and technical capacities** of countries participating in the project, in terms of survey and regular monitoring of the species in question and management of their critical and/or preferred habitats;
- the **feasibility of a long-term funding mechanism** for regular monitoring of the species concerned, in relation to the international obligations of the countries participating in the project;
- an **increased awareness** among local stakeholders of maintaining the good status of marine and coastal environments;
- an **assessment of the results** obtained at the end of the project, establishing concrete recommendations to secure and optimise the monitoring system put in place.

Main activities:

- **activity 9:** training workshops for local stakeholders (team leaders, field operators, various observers, etc.) by subregion or group of subregions, in the use of the standardised survey method and in information management (second half of 2016);
- **activity 10:** preparatory study for a long-term funding mechanism for monitoring operations relating to the species in question, through optimisation of existing resources (second half of 2018);
- **activity 11:** external analysis of the results obtained and recommendations to secure the environmental monitoring mechanism put in place (first half of 2019);
- **activity 12:** overall coordination of project, including running costs for the institutional governance of the project, communications and awareness-raising activities, and organisation of a closing workshop (2016–2019).

### **I.2 Institutional arrangements**

The project will be developed by subregion or group of subregions<sup>30</sup>, depending on the participating countries and available funds.

It will be coordinated at three levels:

- **macroregional:** the **ACCOBAMS Secretariat** will provide administrative and financial management for the project, working with other groups and partner organisations who will ensure that the scientific and technical aspects are carried out correctly. These include:
  - **the project's Steering Committee**, including the ACCOBAMS Secretariat, the French Marine Protected Area Agency, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, and the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas;

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<sup>30</sup> Four Mediterranean subregions (Western Mediterranean Sea, Adriatic Sea, Central Mediterranean Sea and Ionian Sea, Aegean-Levantine Sea) and the Black Sea.

- **the project's Contact Group**, which is made up of national contact persons (Annex 1). This group will ensure the proper operational execution of the project and facilitate contacts with all those involved over the course of the project cycle;
- **the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee**, for aspects relevant to its area of competence.

Each of these groups will be involved in all components of the project.

- **subregional**: subregional coordination for the project will be provided by the institutions designated to assume the role of **coordination units** for implementing the Agreement's plan of action<sup>31</sup>; these units will, in particular, ensure that activities, including survey work and training, are coherent at the level of each subregion and geographical survey sector or group of sectors; they will work with the national contacts designated by each country participating in the project.
- **national**: the involvement of national stakeholders will be key to the success of the project; thus a **national contact** has been designated by each country participating in the project (Annex 1); the role of these contacts will be to contribute to the preparation and successful execution of the project at the country level; they will serve as the contacts for the subregional coordination units and the Secretariat throughout the project cycle, notably at the Contact Group level.

### **1.3**    **Duration**

The duration of the project will be **three years and half (42 months)**, in accordance with **Table 1**.

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<sup>31</sup> Conservation Plan of the Agreement (Annex 2), Article III 7 c.

	2016		2017		2018		2019
	1st semester	2nd semester	1st semester	2nd semester	1st semester	2nd semester	1st semester
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>							
A1							
A2							
A3							
A4							
A5							
A6							
A7							
A8							
A9							
A10							
A11							
A12							

**Tableau 1** – Planning of activities (tentative)



## II PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

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On numerous occasions in the past, ACCOBAMS groups and committees have identified a set of convergent factors which fully justify the development of this project, from the point of view of the Agreement's goals and, more generally, the international commitments and obligations of the countries in the ACCOBAMS region:

- **A chronic lack of data**<sup>32</sup> on the abundance and distribution of the species in question; this data is invaluable for the conservation of this exceptional natural asset at all levels – global, regional and local – and, generally, for monitoring the good status of marine and coastal environments;
- **A lack of cohesion and insufficient coordination and synchronisation** of monitoring operations with regard to these species;
- **A lack of assessment** of the effectiveness and adequacy of measures adopted to conserve these species;
- **Significant pressures** threatening this natural asset, mostly anthropogenic in origin and linked to clearly identified socioeconomic activities, including fishing, tourism, transport and shipping;
- **The need for an ongoing monitoring initiative**, coordinated at the ecoregional level and designed via a participatory process including all stakeholders, with a flexible and evolutionary framework allowing required adjustments to be made over time;
- **Weak capacities** in many countries within the project area in terms of human, technical and financial resources, mean that the countries concerned are unable to reduce these threats and ensure rational use of the environmental goods and services required to maintain natural processes and conserve the species in question and their critical and preferred habitats.

These aspects argue in favour of support from sponsors for a project which:

- Is being developed in a region of high biological significance at the global level;
- Contributes to reducing current gaps and inadequacies linked to the lack of capacity in some countries and the absence of cohesion;
- Involves local stakeholders who are directly affected, at all levels, public authorities, researchers, specialists, students, key socioeconomic actors;
- Is being executed at an ecosystem level corresponding to the distribution of the species in question and their habitats, and to their variability;
- Is based on a standardised approach, innovative at this level, and which can be replicated in other regional contexts, allowing efforts undertaken by countries to be optimised and the costs of monitoring to be minimised;
- Meets the objectives of maintaining/restoring the good status of marine and coastal environments and contributes to the preservation of marine and coastal biodiversity in general;
- Will create a long-term, secure monitoring system which complies with international standards.<sup>33</sup>

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32 E.g.: objective, systematic, current and detailed, long-term series.

33 E.g.: Aarhus Convention and the INSPIRE Directive (2007/2/CE); also the European Union's MISIS and IRIS-SES projects.

**APPENDIX 1**

**LIST AND CONTACT DETAILS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CONTACT GROUP**  
(According to the replies to the questionnaire sent in 2014)

<b>Country</b>	<b>Representatives</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
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