

WORK PLAN FOR THE JOINT NOISE WORKING GROUP OF CMS, ACCOBAMS AND ASCOBANS

(version: September 2026)

The members of the JNWG serve in a voluntary capacity. It is understood that the limited time available to members might make it necessary for the JNWG to prioritize tasks, and that not all requests will be fulfilled in each intersessional period.

Regular Tasks

The JNWG will:

1. Review new information on underwater noise, its impacts on species covered by CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS and their prey species, mitigation measures, technological developments, best practices and guidelines, and make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.
2. Prepare a report on progress and new information for each meeting of the CMS Scientific Council, ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, in particular including:
 - a) Updated information on:
 - new available information on underwater noise, its effects on marine species (including migratory species and their prey), and the effective assessment and management of this threat
 - relevant activities and developments in other international bodies (both regional and global) and under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 - relevant developments and new literature, especially with respect to the impacts of noise on cetaceans, other aquatic mammals, and their prey
 - technologies aimed at mitigating the propagation of marine noise and noise sources that may present a threat to marine life
 - Parties' progress in implementing relevant Resolutions of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS, as appropriate
 - b) Advice on Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) to reduce or mitigate marine noise pollution, e.g. by:
 - improving existing guidelines based on new scientific findings
 - detailing available mitigation measures, alternative technologies and standards required for achieving the conservation goals of CMS, ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS
 - recommending appropriate biological indicators and thresholds
 - c) Provision of advice on:
 - collaborating with other international bodies, such as the Barcelona Convention, Black Sea Commission, OSPAR, HELCOM, CBD, IMO, IWC and ICES
 - requirements of other relevant bodies that countries have elected to adhere to with respect to underwater noise, such as European Directives (i.e. the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive)
 - opportunities for influencing decisions of other relevant bodies to achieve more effective protection of marine life from impacts of underwater noise

3. Design and help implement, as appropriate, pilot projects to test and improve existing noise guidelines (ACCOBAMS Res. 7.13 and ASCOBANS AC17/Doc.4-08) and mitigation measures for their application in the field.
4. Respond to additional requests for support from CMS, ACCOBAMS or ASCOBANS, transmitted through their Secretariats, as required.

Specific CMS Mandates

1. Resolution 12.14 (2017)
 - Upon request, support Parties that have not yet done so in establishing national noise registries to collect and display data on noise-generating activities in the marine area to help assess exposure levels and the likely impacts on the marine environment, ensuring that data standards are made compatible with regional noise registries, such as the ones developed by ICES and ACCOBAMS.
 - Regularly review the *CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise-generating Activities* and provide advice on any need for updates.
2. Decision 15.46 (2026)
 - Develop guidance on mitigation of noise affecting CMS-listed freshwater mammals and their prey.
 - Review the National Anthropogenic Underwater Noise Guidelines developed by the Government of Australia once they become available to (i) evaluate whether an update of the *Technical Support Information to the CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise generating Activities* is still required to provide additional guidance to Parties; (ii) conduct a comprehensive review of sources of underwater noise of concern, including an assessment of existing guidance and knowledge available from CMS and other relevant forums, to identify gaps in current guidance related to the mitigation of underwater noise impacts specifically on migratory species and their prey, and provide recommendations to Parties, including suggestions for effective mitigation measures.
 - If needed, provide a peer review of the updated *Technical Support Information to the CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment for Marine Noise-generating Activities*.
3. Decision 15.47 (c) (2026)
 - Continue providing up-to-date information on the CMS website on marine noise to assist Parties and other stakeholders in effective mitigation of impacts of underwater noise on marine species.

Specific ACCOBAMS Mandates

1. Resolution 5.13 (2013)
 - Develop, in collaboration with Parties and non-Parties, as well as NATO and other stakeholders as necessary, implementable measures to reduce the impacts of intense noise activities within areas identified as 'of special concern' for Cuvier's beaked whales for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties of ACCOBAMS.
 - Organize follow-on workshops on sonar with navies.
2. Resolution 5.15 (2013)
 - Support the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee's study on the extent and temporal variability of the habitat of species that are known to be particularly vulnerable to man-made noise (e.g., *Ziphius cavirostris*), to ensure that more data are made available, to increase the model's robustness and to compare different algorithms for best results.

3. Resolution 7.13 (2019) and 8.17 (2022)

- Review a study on the effects of underwater noise generated by the foreseeable increase of windfarms in the ACCOBAMS Area, addressing all the phases of windfarm development from siting surveys to decommissioning.
- Examine noise models available in NETCCOBAMS (ACCOBAMS Resolution 8.7 on NETCCOBAMS), considering recent developments from European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive-D11C2, to compare such noise models with available in situ anthropogenic noise recordings made in different locations throughout the ACCOBAMS Area, taking account of the diverse sensitivities of different cetacean species.
- Further develop, with the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee, the concept of 'quiet zones', as outlined in Recommendation 10.5 of the Scientific Committee, with a focus on a quantitative elaboration and evaluation of scientific evidence for establishing 'quiet zones' across both space and time.
- Develop a post-war plan for the Black Sea region to help mitigate the impacts of warfare on cetaceans, their habitat and their prey.

4. Resolution 8.2 (2022)

- Encourage the monitoring of anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise.
- Encourage the use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise.
- Exchange relevant information with competent authorities before military activities/exercises.

5. Resolution 9.15 (2025)

- Encourages the JNWG to continue supporting the UNEP/MAP in the development of the IMAP EO11 on energy including underwater noise and its related common indicators 26 and 27 as well as in the preparation of the related chapter within the next MED QSR.
- Encourages the JNWG to continue its work, including:
 - a) the further development of the concept of "quiet zones", as outlined in Recommendation 10.5 of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee;
 - b) the updating of the noise models available in NETCCOBAMS, securing their compliance with evolving guidance from the European Union Technical Group on Underwater Noise under the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
 - c) the comparison of the results of noise modelling with appropriate in situ anthropogenic noise recordings made throughout the Agreement Area, taking account of the diverse sensitivities of the different cetacean species;
 - d) the continued efforts to monitor anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise;
 - e) the further encouragement of the use of mitigation measures for anthropogenic activities generating underwater noise;
 - f) the further efforts to develop and assess the effectiveness of new mitigation measures; and
 - g) the improved exchange, among the competent authorities, of relevant information related to military activities and exercises, from planning to assessment of impacts.
- Requests the organisation of an in-person meeting of the JNWG, including the drafting of the relevant Terms of Reference, the establishment of a Steering Group, and funding.

Specific ASCOBANS Mandates

1. Resolution 8.3 (2016)
 - Contribute to improving knowledge on impact of impulsive and continuous anthropogenic underwater noise on harbour porpoises, and the development of threshold limits of significant disturbance and indicators of good environmental status (GES) (Jastarnia Plan, Action RES-07).
 - Contribute to evaluation of implementing regionally harmonized national threshold limits and guidelines for regulation of underwater noise (Jastarnia Plan, Action MIT-05).
2. Resolution 8.11 (Rev.MOP9) (2020)
 - In collaboration with the CMS Scientific Council, assess the need for updating the guidelines and/or its Technical Support Information regularly, as appropriate.
 - Support the Advisory Committee to continue monitoring new available information on the effects of underwater noise on cetaceans and their prey species, as well as the effective assessment and management of this threat, and to make recommendations to Parties as appropriate.
 - Support the Advisory Committee to engage and collaborate with other relevant bodies considering anthropogenic noise, including the IWC, ICES, HELCOM and OSPAR.
3. Resolution 10.2/Rev.1 (2024)
 - Review new information on underwater noise, its impacts on small cetaceans and their prey species, mitigation measures, monitoring, technological developments, best practices and guidelines. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.
 - Review new information on high order and low order UXO detonation in the marine environment, the associated chemical release and the effect on small cetaceans and their prey. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities, e.g. when proposing noise mitigation measures.
 - Assess whether national navies' mitigation protocols for use of military sonar are effective. This requires Parties to request the mitigation protocols from the navies.
 - Review new information on UXO and underwater munitions and their impacts on small cetaceans and cetacean habitat. Make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities and fora, such as OSPAR and HELCOM for further action.
4. ASCOBANS AC26 (2021)
 - Advise on how to improve monitoring and mitigation of underwater noise and to reduce the cumulative impact on small cetaceans (AC26/AP2).
 - Provide guidance on monitoring and mitigating the impact of continuous and impulsive noise, noting recommendations included in [ASCOBANS/AC23/Inf.5.1.1a](#) (AC26/AP2).
 - Develop guidelines for mitigation of explosions and environmentally sound removal of UXO from the sea (AC26/AP10).
5. ASCOBANS AC29 (2025)
 - Review new information on noise from seismic surveys and the range/extent of Ultra-Short Baseline (USBL) signals and other underwater acoustic positioning systems; assess potential impacts on small cetaceans; review mitigation measures, technological developments, best practices and guidelines; and make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action (AC29/AP1).
 - Investigate additional, currently under-researched sources of underwater noise pollution, including USBL, anti-fouling and other similar industry processes that use targeted frequencies (AC29/AP2).