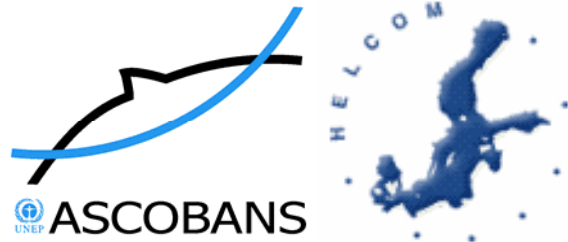


**8-10 October 2007: Two joint ASCOBANS/HELCOM Workshops to be held in Bonn**



A **Workshop on Small Cetacean Population Structure in the ASCOBANS Area** will be held on the first two days, drawing together almost thirty experts in order to provide a forum for informal presentation and discussion and for promoting and facilitating cooperation across borders.

The objectives of the workshop are to contribute to the definition of population units of interest to management and to the identification of the strengths and limitations of different approaches used in discriminating between populations, such as genetic techniques, skeletal variation, stable isotope signatures, results of telemetry studies and other approaches. The establishment of an agreed set of criteria for investigating population structure and a review of sampling protocols, methodologies for sample collection and standardisation of laboratory techniques are also on the Agenda, as well as a review of statistical techniques for identifying population units. On the basis of the best available information, the experts will attempt to derive population boundaries where appropriate for the following four species: harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin, short-beaked common dolphin, and white-beaked dolphin; and where this is not possible, identify what information gaps need to be filled.

The third day is reserved for a **Workshop on Genetics and Population Structure of the Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic**, which will be held in a smaller group specialised on the specific situation of the only native cetacean in the Baltic Sea.

The Jastarnia Plan, a Recovery Plan for the Baltic Harbour Porpoise developed under ASCOBANS, recognises a need to identify and agree upon appropriate population units for harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea in order to improve management. To date, there have been a number of independent studies using samples obtained from different locations and time periods, and using different methodological approaches. These require synthesising and evaluating. Accordingly, the workshop aims at reviewing the status of knowledge on population structure of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea (including Kattegatt and Belt Sea), as derived from genetic evidence, morphometric skeletal variation, contaminant and parasite burdens or results of telemetry studies and to reach agreement on biologically meaningful boundaries for conservation management of the harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea. The experts will discuss how characteristics of separate populations/sub-populations within the Baltic Sea can be identified by means of genetic variability, population history or movement patterns and seasonality, including any gender differences. Also, gaps in knowledge of evidence for distinct populations and recommendation of research programs to address any such gaps will be discussed and a consensus on best genetic and ecological methods and standards to achieve more comparable and informative results in the future will be sought.

At both workshops, agreement should also be reached on the best way ahead, which could be either the establishment of a network that will gather and maybe re-analyse all available results to give the best overview of the population structure; or a proposal for a research project where new samples and other data are collected over the next few years to get a more solid basis for understanding the population structure of the species in the region.

The workshops will take place at the UN Campus Bonn, Germany. For any queries, please contact Tine Lindberg at [ascobans@ascobans.org](mailto:ascobans@ascobans.org), +49 228 815 2416.