

ASCOBANS agreement

Official reference	Agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas	
Official website	www.ascobans.org	
Relevant dates	Document	13/09/1991
	Entry into force	29/03/1994
	Ratification by Belgium	14/05/1993
Policy level	International	
Type of instrument	Agreement	
Geographical reach	Regional EU-seas (Baltic Sea, North Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Irish Sea)	
(Legal) coverage in the BNS	Territorial sea, exclusive economic zone	
International contact point	ASCOBANS-secretariat	
Competent authorities in Belgium	Federal authorities; FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment; DG Environment; Agency Marine Environment	
Federal ratification law	This agreement has not been ratified by law, and was only published in the Belgian Official Journal (B.S. 20 October 1993), in contrast to other implementation agreements of the Bonn Convention. See A. CLIQUET, o.c., 172, footnote 1056 (<i>Vandamme en Cliquet, 2008</i> ¹²²¹⁹⁸).	

// abstract:

ASCOBANS is an agreement that was adopted under the 'Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals' (*Bonn convention* p.24). The ASCOBANS agreement applies to all species, including sub-species and populations, of toothed whales (Odontoceti) in the specific target areas (Baltic Sea, North East Atlantic Ocean, Irish Sea, North Sea) with the exception of the sperm whale. The aim of the ASCOBANS agreement is to achieve and further a recommendatory conservation status for small cetaceans. It therefore obliges the participating States to take measures for the conservation, research and management of these cetaceans. The management regulations concern the protection and the management of their habitats (preventing discharges), the limitation of bycatch through changing the fishing equipment and fishing practices, the regulation of activities that harm the feeding resources, and the prevention of important nuisance (e.g. noise). On the research level, the States have to estimate the seasonal shifts and the conditions of the populations and the stocks (through developing and improving the methodologies) while also being tasked with highlighting the areas of primary importance for their survival (breeding and alimentation areas). Furthermore, the current and potential threats with regard to each species are identified. The ASCOBANS States are, additionally, pursuing the implementation of a ban on the capture or deliberate killing of small cetaceans, and all actively stand behind the obligation of releasing each healthy animal that has been caught.