

# Species: Harbour Porpoise

OSPAR Recommendation 2013/11:

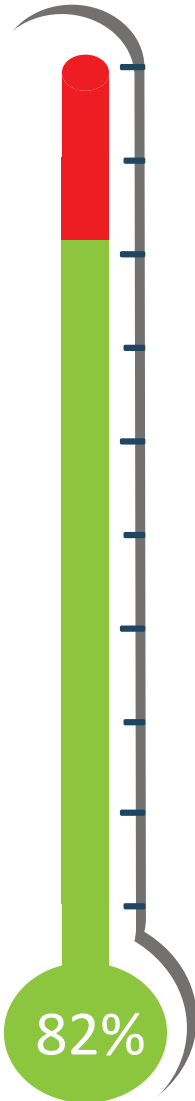
Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect the harbour porpoise include measure under the EU Habitats Directive, national fisheries measures and designation of MPAs



## Description

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) is generally a continental shelf species distributed in cold temperate and subarctic waters in the Northern Hemisphere. It is characterised by a blunt short-beaked head and a low wide based triangular dorsal fin. Adults are usually less than 1.8 m long and weigh from 45 to 70 kg. Generally, Harbour Porpoise occurs singly or in small groups of less than eight individuals. Occasionally, larger schools of up to several hundred animals have been reported. Their prey consists of a wide variety of fish and cephalopods, with regional variation of their main prey items.



## Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. Recent examples include:

1. Contracting Parties that are EU member states have had to strictly protect harbour porpoise under the Habitats Directive;
2. Some parties have, or are developing, broadscale conservation plans and/or industry guidance for harbour porpoise;
3. Belgium and Germany has introduced fisheries measures to prohibit use of set nets in certain locations;
4. Germany and the Netherlands have designated protected areas;
5. Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, and the UK have monitoring programmes in place;
6. Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK have noise mitigation measures in place and continue to develop these;
7. Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK have processes in place to address strandings and undertake post mortems;
8. Belgium, Germany, and the UK publish reports, leaflets, booklets, and webpages which promote the conservation of harbour porpoise.

## Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. [Click here for more information on the index.](#)

## Condition

The population estimates for harbour porpoise in the North Sea, and Kattegat / Belt Seas, show no evidence of any change in abundance since 1994. However, for harbour porpoise in the North Sea, a substantial southward shift in distribution occurred between 1994 and 2005, and was maintained in 2016 most likely due to changes in prey availability.



### References:

- OSPAR Background Document for Harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* (OSPAR Publication 420)
- OSPAR Recommendation 2013/11
- OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)