



# WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH, ENTANGLEMENTS AND LIVE STRANDINGS

*19 May 2022  
Copenhagen, Denmark*

## **REPORT**



Harbour porpoise in gillnet © Krzysztof Skóra-Hel Marine Station

**Please cite this report as:**

NAMMCO-North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (2022). Report of the Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings, May 2022, Tromsø, Norway.

Available at <https://nammco.no/topics/bycels-reports/>

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## 1. SUMMARY

The Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings (BYCELS) met at the Greenland Representation 19 May 2022.

Present were Hild Ynnesdal, Guro Gjelsvik and Kathrine A. Ryeng (Norway), Guðni Magnús Eiríksson and Elin B. Ragnarsdóttir (Iceland), Ulla Svarrer Wang (chair) , online, (Faroe Islands), Masaana Dorph (Greenland) and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat.

## 2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS

The Chair, Ulla Svarrer Wang, opened the meeting for comments to the agenda. The agenda was adopted, and meeting documents reviewed (Appendix 1).

## 3. ANNUAL REPORTING FROM MEMBERS

This agenda item was discussed in a joint meeting of the CIO, CHM and BYCELS.

The current annual reporting to NAMMCO from the member countries was introduced in the 2020 reporting for the year 2019. The content and format of the requests were agreed and approved by Council in 2019 after considerable discussions over several years in all the relevant committees. The background for the new extended reporting was a desire to develop a procedure whereby the member countries submitted, once a year, all the data required for the committees to go about their tasks in the most efficient manner. Furthermore, it was also an attempt to standardise data with the objective of being able to make comparisons between countries and activities.

Based on the accumulated experiences since 2020 it has become apparent that there are too many “non-functional” data categories primarily because they were identified based on a “nice to know” rather than “necessary to know” basis. Experience has also revealed that the diversity of target species, hunting methods, national regulations and praxis make many of the requested data redundant and renders a feeling of purposelessness for the members. Reporting requires the involvement of different national departments and institutions and as such represents a major effort for the members countries. A growing concern from all involved has therefore surfaced when the outcome is that the usability of the reporting does not meet the expectations, and the ruling perception is that the whole annual reporting procedure is ineffective and serves little purpose for the member countries.

The different committees reviewed and re-evaluated all data categories pertaining to their ToR taking into consideration:

- what data does NAMMCO/the committee need to meet its mandate
- priorities for the members with respect to mandate

Several categories were deleted, and the agreed result is reflected in the revised Database May 2022.

In relation to the work of BYCELS it was acknowledged that a substantial amount of time had been spent identifying all the current data categories. It was however especially evident that the member countries did not have a system in place that could accommodate all these information categories. Coming full circle BYCELS noted the following:

### By-catch

The quality and robustness of the existing report schemes was discussed. IS and NO reported that they have introduced drones to monitor certain fisheries and through that also marine mammal by-catch.

Referring to earlier discussions (BYCELS report July 2020, copied below in cursive) professional/recreational category was deleted.

*To report on both professional and recreational by-catch as it could give further and valuable information on by-catch. At the moment, the Faroe Islands and Iceland only report by-catch from professional fisheries. Norway developed an app to report by-catch induced by recreational fisheries, but since reporting occurs only on a voluntary basis, it is not reliable data. Greenland underlined that in their reporting there is no distinction between professional and recreational fishermen – both are included in the reporting. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the Greenlandic situation have several more distinctions that would not fit into only these two categories.*

BYCELS agreed to delete the categories: month, professional/recreational, detailed gear. With respect to fishing

#### Entanglements

The requested data were very detailed of which most have been and are foreseen to remain unanswered due to how these events are reported in the member countries.

Deleted categories: length, part of animal entangled/entrapped

#### Strandings

The randomness of reported information (time and space, quality of the data reported) and the fact that there is no national stranding network organised in the member countries directed BYCELS to delete categories: length, sex, age class, decomposition stage, sampling, tentative cause of stranding.

The meeting agreed that the manner in which the annual reporting is carried out is not ideal. It is inefficient both for the member countries and for the Secretariat. It was agreed that it would be recommendable to find better ways of doing it, perhaps by implementing new software that would enable members to submit the data directly into the database.

## **4. GUIDELINES ON EUTHANASIA**

Document NAMMCO/BYCELS-Guidelines on euthanasia contained the current version of the guidelines.

Council 28 had asked BYCELS to incorporate the use of the spinal lance in the guidelines and present a revised version to the next Council meeting.

BYCELS noted that this task would mainly consist of incorporating a paragraph on the use of the lance and that this was described in the Manual on pilot whaling.

Wang agreed that FO would take the lead and draft a new set of guidelines for the consideration of BYCELS before the next Council meeting in September 2022.

## **5. FOLLOW UP FROM THE LAST MEETING – FUTURE OF BYCELS**

In the last meeting, the Chair and the Secretariat had been asked to investigate if there was a basis for conducting any analysis from the existing database and also what it would take to e.g., develop interactive maps based on the existing data. No advances had been made in the interim and BYCELS focused the discussion on the broader question of the future of the WG.

BYCELS reiterated the concerns and views expressed at the last meeting, concluding that it had accomplished and followed through on what was initially identified as tasks:

- Make an overview of the extent of bycatch, entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings, including dead strandings in the member countries.
- Review existing guidelines (IWC, ASCOBANS and others) on by-catch, including entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings with the aim of identifying procedures and actions for recommendation to NAMMCO.
- Cooperate with and inform relevant network of the existence of BYCELS.

BYCELS has developed the guidelines on how to euthanise stranded cetaceans, and these would now be revised to also include the spinal lance (agenda item 4).

Based on a review of existing protocols and guidelines for sampling of stranded animals, BYCELS had given the recommendation that member countries use the most recent recognised protocol. Attention was drawn to the 2019 ASCOBANS report “Best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigations and tissue sampling”.

BYCELS has reviewed stranding response networks and has made guidelines on how to set up national response network.

BYCELS has recommended not to develop guidelines for disentanglement due to concerns that the existence of guidelines might prompt untrained personnel to try to disentangle animals themselves. This would represent a very high risk to human lives, and it might also worsen the situation for the entangled animal.

BYCELS was established as a working group and not a committee and in line with its Terms of reference and other WGs it would be natural to convene in response to a request for its advice and not by default on a pre-set annual basis.

BYCELS therefor agreed to not schedule new meetings until the Council or members countries ask for advice within the BYCELS mandate. BYCELS emphasised that animal welfare issues related to by-catch, entanglement and strandings most probably would only increase in the future, and it was therefore very important for NAMMCO to have a competent body addressing these questions.

## **6. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

The report was adopted by correspondence on 21 June 2022.

## **APPENDIX: AGENDA AND LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

### **AGENDA**

1. Adoption of agenda and review of documents
2. Annual reporting from members
3. Guidelines on Euthanasia
4. Follow up from the last meeting
5. Any other business

### **LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

NAMMCO/CHM-CIO-BYCELS-2022-01/01	Agenda and List of Documents
NAMMCO/Database-2021	NAMMCO database
NAMMCO/BYCELS-Guidelines on euthanasia	Guidelines