

## Network for the Conservation of Cetaceans and Sea Turtles in the Adriatic

The Netcet Project is financed by the IPA Adriatic CBC Programme and more specifically within the Priority 2 “Natural and Cultural Resources and Risk Prevention”.

The general aim of this Cross-border Cooperation Programme is strengthening sustainable development capabilities of the Adriatic region through a concerted strategy of action among the partners of the eligible territories.

Web site: [www.adriaticipacbc.org](http://www.adriaticipacbc.org)

### SUMMARY

*Final Conference*

*NETCET results*

*Consultation meeting in Italy*

*NETCET City Network*

## 1. Final Conference: one day and a half to remember



Just like many European projects, NETCET organised a final conference; what participants will mostly remember is the vastness of the results presented, the quality of the presentations, the passionate atmosphere around keynote speeches and the concrete positive steps towards the theme that gathered over 100 people in the same room: the conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles in the Adriatic Sea.

After the welcoming words from the City of Venice and the Managing Authority of IPA Adriatic CBC Programme, the **first session** was entirely dedicated to the **illustration**

**of the results achieved by the project** such as a shared standardized scientific knowledge and effective collaboration between the organisations involved in cetaceans and sea turtles conservation in the Adriatic, a greater institutional capacity for the conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles in partner states, improved knowledge of Adriatic cetaceans and sea turtles populations, hot-spots and major threats, increased technical capacity for sea turtle recovery in the Adriatic and effective treatment of stranded/injured sea turtles

in high level structures and increased information available for citizens through the centres. The project also increased coastal communities' awareness of the presence and conservation needs of these species and widespread adoption by fishermen of correct handling procedures, improved conservation and management of cetaceans and sea turtles conservation and their habitats in the Adriatic through effective regional cooperation and clearly gave a sense of ownership towards and pride in the natural heritage in the Adriatic.

**These results were then discussed and put in a global perspective thanks to the intervention of three world famous expert speakers** such as: **Roderic Mast**, President of the Oceanic Society, Co-Chair of the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, (IUCN), USA, **Randall Reeves**, Chair of the Cetacean Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Canada, and **Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara**, President, Tethys Research Institute, and Co-Chair at IUCN Task Force on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, Italy.

They managed to bring their experiences and inputs in marine biodiversity conservation problems and provided high quality "food for thought" and inspirations for all participants as diverse as they were: scientists, policy makers, veterinarians, researchers, regional and city representatives.

**The day continued with an unusual "learning by sharing" session where 7 "sisters" projects were invited to present their results** and highlight the links with NETCET results. This was particularly appreciated as a useful exercise to have a complete view of what similar projects are doing and how to cross-fertilize the findings and possibly use them for new projects. **The day was topped off with the intervention of Paola di Salvatore, IPA Adriatic CBC Programme**, who gave her considerations on the project and her vision about how to capitalise the incredible wealth of NETCET results.



**The second day**, dedicated to the presentation of the Common Strategies and National Action Plans for the conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans in each of the five Adriatic countries, was introduced by European specialist **Vedran Nikolić, Policy officer, Nature unit, European Commission, DG Environment** who **gave encouraging and precious information about the 7th Environment Action Program and the EU Habitats Directive**. **Last session was dedicated to the cities and regions and their involvement in the Adriatic marine conservation**. The NETCET City Network with its 30 cities was presented and its continuity insured by the City of Numana (Italy). Associated regions of NETCET and the adviser for marine fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro explained their strategies and policies for sea turtles and cetaceans strandings and conservation. The involvement of Adriatic regions and the NETCET City Network ensured their institutional contribution to strategy implementation and regional cohesion in the Adriatic Euroregion. The final conference closed on a happy note full of hopes for future projects and scientific and policy improvements to be remembered.

The conference presentations and video are available to the public at:

[http://netcet.eu/2013-01-04-21-37-20/item/129-final\\_conference\\_video](http://netcet.eu/2013-01-04-21-37-20/item/129-final_conference_video)

[http://netcet.eu/2013-01-04-21-37-20/item/128-final\\_conference\\_presentations](http://netcet.eu/2013-01-04-21-37-20/item/128-final_conference_presentations)

Carole Maignan – Project Manager – NETCET project

## 2. NETCET results

The results of the NETCET monitoring activities inform us that the Adriatic Sea is more important for cetaceans and sea turtles than ever imagined before.

The **aerial survey** (over 14,000 km in 100 hours surveys) has provided an overview of the use of the Adriatic Sea by these species and revealed that the Northern Adriatic is particularly important for sea turtles. This was confirmed by the **satellite tracking of 20 juvenile loggerhead turtles (JLT) and 3 green turtles (GT)** which proved that JLT remain in the Adriatic Sea with seasonal movements strongly dependent on the Northern Adriatic foraging grounds, and GT move to warmer waters of the Southern Adriatic during winter. **Through an on-line system, everyone can follow the movements of the “NETCET” turtles:**

[http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/?project\\_id=1021](http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/?project_id=1021)

The aerial survey also showed a diversity of cetaceans in the region with large numbers of striped dolphins and the presence of Cuvier's beaked whales in the Southern Adriatic Sea. Bottlenose dolphin populations were monitored through consistent photo-identification studies (over 500 hours of boat surveys) in all the Adriatic countries. Analysis shows that each of these population is unique with little mixing between them.

At individual level, stranded animals were also examined and causes of death analysed for both mass and individual beaching.



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During the last months of the project and using the results of all previous NETCET activities, **NETCET partners have identified the future conservation needs of cetaceans and sea turtles in the Adriatic Sea, developing appropriate Strategies for the next decade**

(2016 – 2025). The purpose of these documents is to transform existing resources into concrete conservation actions in order to realise the common vision of: “The Adriatic as a safe place for cetaceans, sea turtles and humans to coexist”.

**The common Strategies for Conservation of Cetaceans and Sea Turtles will be available in the form of two booklets on the project website:**

<http://netcet.eu/dissemination/item/124-common-strategies-conservation-stc>



In addition, these Strategies should be used as guidelines for the development of National Action Plans in each Adriatic country: partners have organized consultation meetings in their countries (Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Albania) with Ministries and all the stakeholders dealing with cetaceans and sea turtles in order to detect the key elements to improve in the existing NAPs, define new NAPs and receive official approval from the competent Ministries and give impetus for the implementation of the existing NAPs.

One of the first NETCET initiatives was to create a **scientific network** with experts from different research fields within the Adriatic basin in order to share knowledge and experience, and develop common databases for reporting stranding. This network helps scientists to observe any increase in mortality of animals living in the Adriatic Sea and to follow common protocols and strategies to face future emergencies.

NETCET has also put in place an **Adriatic Emergency Task Force**. It is a group of experts (biologists and veterinarians) in cetacean and sea turtle (C&ST) sciences such as behaviour, physiology, rescue and medicine, trained to intervene in case of environmental incidents, such

as unusual mortality events or mass strandings. They act as a specialist team to support national authorities. The first incident took place in September 2014 in Vasto (Italy) where seven sperm whales stranded on the beach. More than eighty members of the task force worked together to try to save these stranded animals.

In parallel 133 veterinarians have benefited from training programmes on veterinary operations and stranding management for cetaceans and sea turtles.

Please consult the **Adriatic Emergency Task Force** proposal at the following link:

<http://www.netcet.eu/dissemination/item/130-the-adriatic-emergency-task-force-proposal>

Standard protocols for post-mortem and physical examination of C&ST were produced and distributed:

<http://www.netcet.eu/dissemination/item/131-standard-protocols-for-post-mortem-and-physical-examination-of-cst>

Reference textbooks on veterinarian operations for specialists working with cetaceans and sea turtles were produced and distributed to the relevant users. Please consult the handbook for Cetaceans' Strandings edited by Sandro Mazzariol, Bruno Cozzi and Cinzia Centelleghé at the following link:

<http://www.netcet.eu/dissemination/item/132-handbook-for-cetaceans%E2%80%99-strandings>

Thanks to the project 3 new **centres for ST (emergency and rehabilitation)** were created in Albania, Croatia and Italy, and the equipment of 13 other existing centres was improved of in Italy and Croatia. A rehabilitation pool in Numana was set up in the sea waters of Numana beach.

The NETCET awareness campaigns around the Adriatic reached the objective for the quantity and quality of the population targets:

- 100 public releases of sea turtles attended by over 10,000 people.
- 2 million inhabitants reached by mass-media about the conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans.
- More than 700 fishermen made aware of the impact of their activity on sea turtles, and of the correct procedures to rescue animals accidentally captured in their fishing gear.
- More than 4,000 leisure boat owners informed about how to drive and behave around cetaceans and sea turtles to minimize their disturbance.
- Over 3,000 schoolchildren living along the Adriatic coast taught about the conservation of these species using a dedicated educational kit.

In the project web site you can find the NETCET educational kit for elementary schools children and their teachers:

<http://www.netcet.eu/dissemination/item/133-educational-kit-materials>



### **3. Consultation meeting in Italy: “Cities and Regions together for cetaceans and sea turtles conservation”**

On the 8th October 2015, a consultation meeting for the Italian cities of the NETCET City Network and the Italian Adriatic regions took place in Venice, in the Porta Nuova Tower at the Arsenale di Venezia. Many representatives of local institutions and organisations taking care of sea turtles and cetaceans were also present.

After a brief opening of the workshop by Massimiliano De Martin, Deputy Mayor for the Environment in the City of Venice, Carole Maignan, project manager of NETCET Project, gave a widespread view of the project underlining issues and objectives of the project and of the meeting. The **first session** started with **Caterina Fortuna**, researcher at the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research who **presented the results of activities related to monitoring of cetaceans and sea turtles in the Adriatic and clarified**

the classification of the legal and normative framework in relation to the conservation of these species, both at national and international level. She presented the objectives of the draft National Action Plans for the conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles in Adriatic inviting the participants to give comments. The final aim is indeed to present this draft to the relevant Ministries after a phase of



sharing, discussion and approval by the local and regional authorities. The Plan has two main objectives, each one declined into specific objectives realized with periodic or temporary actions and is essential for the definition of rules and responsibilities. After the workshop, the City of Venice sent the draft to all participants of the meeting to start this “bottom up” process.

Then Sandro Mazzariol, University of Padova, described the management of stranding in Italy and gave examples on the role of the institutions

being sometimes unclear. Results show that from a scientific point of view, many are the steps that have been achieved and help us to understand better how the Adriatic sea is a fundamental reference habitat for sea turtles and cetaceans. This was possible not only because of the creation of standardised databases but also because of the definition of common procedures on how to deal with strandings and how to analyse the observations and results obtained during these strandings.

**After the NETCET partners presentations, it was the turn to cities and regions to bring their good practices to the attention of the meeting's participants:** Sergio Ventrella from the Tuscan Observatory for Biodiversity, presented the Pelagos Sanctuary, based on an agreement between Italy, France and Monaco implying direct involvement of cities. Claudio Zabaglia, Marche Region manager, presented the case of the city of Numana with its best practice starting with the creation of a natural pool on the beach for recovering sea turtles and training activities for fishermen. He underlined the fundamental aspect of efficient communication and involvement of the political bodies, and the crucial role of cetaceans and sea turtles as key elements in identifying environmental issues focusing on a few clear actions. Attilio Rinaldi, Emilia-Romagna regional network, presented the case of his region as a good example of coordination for developing emergency centers, monitoring, research improvement and creation of data base, dissemination and education and finally collaboration for action plans. Vincenzo Olivieri, veterinary of the Centro Studi Cetacei, explained the disposal and removal procedure in strandings in Pescara city and underlines the importance of biometry. Dario Gallotti, City of Venice, illustrated how the management of strandings along the Venetian coast takes place. He insisted on the importance of a clear and univocal protocol on reporting, site reaching and operativity, and of a 24h coverage.

**The last session, moderated by Sauro Pari, Cetacea Foundation, presented the roles of the NETCET City Network cities and the 3 associated regions, and underlined the importance of the coastal cities choices for their tourism policies.**

To have more information about this workshop, and a complete vision of the different presentations, do not hesitate to consult our website: <http://www.netcet.eu/2013-01-04-21-37-20/item/121-a-netcet-%E2%80%9Cconsultation-meeting%E2%80%9D-on-the-roles-of-italian-citiesregions-for-ctst>

## 4. NETCET City Network: Adriatic Cities Together for Cetaceans and Sea Turtles

**Conservation developments for the Adriatic Sea**

**NETCET City Network**  
A network of cities along the Adriatic coast with the aim of raising awareness for the conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans. See more at: [www.netcet.eu/city-network](http://www.netcet.eu/city-network)

**Emergency centre**  
First aid for injured sea turtles (maximum stay: 48 hours before the transfer to a rehabilitation centre)

**Rehabilitation centre**  
Assistance for sea turtles in the hospitalization or convalescence phase

**VENICE - ITALY**  
The sea turtle emergency centre is composed of 3 tanks and a laboratory equipped with veterinary first aid tools. An office has also been set up to collect data on sea turtles.

**RICCIONE - ITALY**

**NUMANA - ITALY**  
A protected marine area has been set up to monitor recovering sea turtles before their release.

**PESCARA - ITALY**  
The sea turtle rehabilitation centre has been set up with a convalescence and isolation area equipped with 15 tanks. The centre has also an area dedicated to educational activities and a space for conferences and trainings addressed to professionals.

**MALI LOŠINJ - CROATIA**  
The Blue World Institute sea turtle rehabilitation center is located in the middle of the tourist complex in "Sunny Bay" Mali Lošinj and has the capacity to host 4 injured turtles, for short term recovery.

**PULA - CROATIA**

**PATOK - ALBANIA**  
The centre is composed of 2 rooms: a laboratory equipped with veterinary first aid tools and 2 two tanks, a conference room with a capacity of 60 people for awareness raising lectures.

Centres set up thanks to the NETCET project:  
 ● Emergency centres ● Rehabilitation centres  
 ● Existing emergency or ● rehabilitation centres improved thanks to the NETCET project:  
 1 Brač Island (Croatia) 7 Dubrovnik (Croatia)  
 2 Rijeka (Croatia) 8 Korčula Island (Croatia)  
 3 Zadar (Croatia) 9 Lošinj (Croatia)  
 4 Pag Island (Croatia) 10 Krk (Croatia)  
 5 Šibenik (Croatia) 11 Pula (Croatia)  
 6 Split (Croatia) 12 Riccione (Italy)  
 and two centres in Zagreb (Croatia): Croatian Veterinary Institute (CVI) & University of Veterinary Medicine (UVM)

NETCET City Network

One of the main purposes of the NETCET project is to enhance cooperation and strengthen networking among cities involved in sea turtles/cetaceans conservation throughout the Adriatic. The NETCET City Network is aiming at raising awareness of cities on their role for the conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans. Adriatic Cities participating to the Network commit themselves to inform the general public about the threats for these endangered species and proceed to reduce directly the risks for these

marine animals (for example promoting the speed reduction of boats in the area with cetaceans and sea turtles, organising "Turtle or Dolphin Day").

**We are very proud to say that we have 30 cities in our "network"** so far: 15 cities in Italy (Brindisi, Caorle, Chioggia, Fano, Grado, Jesolo, Manfredonia, Numana, Pedaso, Pescara, Pineto, Roseto degli Abruzzi, San Benedetto del Tronto, Trieste, Venice), 6 in Croatia (Dubrovnik, Komiža, Mali Losinj, Pula-Pola, Rijeka, Zadar), 4 in Montenegro (Budva, Kotor, Tivat, Ulcinj), 4 in Albania (Durres, Orikum, Patok- Fushe Kuqe, Vlora) and 1 in Slovenia (Koper).

Being part of this network gives cities the possibility to inform and publicise any current or planned activity related to sea turtles and cetaceans on the NETCET project and City of Venice websites. Every city was invited to participate to the future elaboration of common strategies for the conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans and to the Venice Final Conference in December 2015.



The city of Numana (Italy), thanks to its Civil Protection Service (Environment), is carrying on an important activity of safeguard and assistance of big marine vertebrates with a particular attention to sea turtles and cetaceans living in the Adriatic. The adhesion of Numana to the NETCET City Network was thus natural and it went even further: **Numana will become the new coordinator of the NETCET city network after the end of the project** (end of January 2016) guaranteeing the continuity and sustainability of this network. The activities promoted within the network comply perfectly with those started years ago by Numana for the protection and conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles. The whole NETCET team wishes good luck to the new coordinator and is happy to stay in the network.



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