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Orientation: Integrated Management of the Sea
Specialization Area: Analysis and Environmental assessment
Research Area: 3.5. Biodiversity and littoral zone ecology



PhD project: **Modelling distribution and habitat use of cetacean species of continental shelf waters of the North East Atlantic**

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Summary: The abundance of a population, its temporal and spatial variability and how individuals occupy the habitat are parameters needed to determine its conservation status. Abundance is probably one of the most important parameters when considering the ecological role of a population, and together with its range, has been included in some European legislation (e.g. Habitats Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive).

The main objective of this thesis is modelling both the abundance and habitat use of the main cetacean species in waters of the continental shelf of the NE Atlantic together with their trends. Different methods of data collection, information sources and several statistical approaches are being assessed. The thesis is a compilation of four case studies, each using a different methodology for the collection and statistical analysis of cetacean sightings data from different locations along the North East Atlantic waters and coasts.

Analyzing this type of information and testing different methodologies, following the requirements established by the national and European community legislation, e.g. the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, is extremely important in order to assess the conservation status of these protected species, as well as to assess the impact of different stressors or pressures on their populations.

