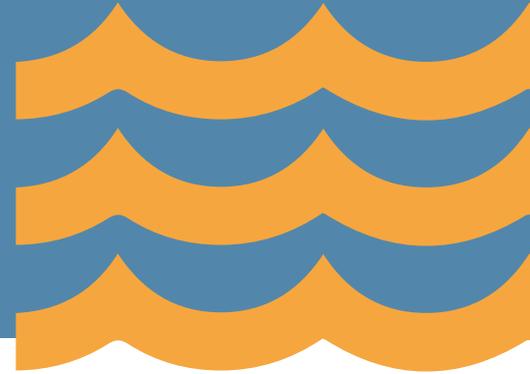


THE CASE

FOR A DOLPHIN SEA REFUGE IN ITALY:

A CONCEPT PAPER



GIUSEPPE NOTARBARTOLO DI SCIARA TETHYS RESEARCH INSTITUTE | VIALE G.B. GADIO 2, 20121 MILAN, ITALY

JOAN GONZALVO TETHYS RESEARCH INSTITUTE | VIALE G.B. GADIO 2, 20121 MILAN, ITALY

SANDRO MAZZARIOL RIVIERA BOSCO PICCOLO 101, 30034 MIRA (VE), ITALY

GAIA ANGELINI LAV | VIALE REGINA MARGHERITA 177, 00198 ROMA, ITALY

CATHY WILLIAMSON WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION | BROOKFIELD HOUSE, 38 ST PAUL ST, CHIPPENHAM SN15 1LJ, UNITED KINGDOM

Despite an increasing human global population, urbanization and industrialization, our interest in animal welfare continues to increase. Indeed, despite great social, political and civil concerns, Mahatma Gandhi is reported as stating “The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated”. Thus it is imperative that we examine the way we currently treat dolphins and whales, species known for their intelligence and complex social interactions, and strive to improve our behaviour with respect to these animals. Rather than use these animals as sources of entertainment in conditions that do not meet their social and physical needs, we must develop facilities that can humanely care for sick and stranded animals, and provide refuge for animals without housing options. The development of a dolphin refuge in Italy will represent an important milestone in the evolution of our attitude to cetaceans.

Frances M.D. Gulland, Vet DM, PhD
Marine Mammal Center, Sausalito, California

WHY A DOLPHIN REFUGE IN ITALY

A major campaign against dolphins in captivity conducted in Europe by several organisations such as the Born Free Foundation, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, the Italian Lega Anti Vivisezione LAV and Marevivo is beginning to bear fruits.

In January 2015, the closure of the Rimini Dolphinarium by the Italian authorities set a historical precedent. Not only the Rimini dolphinarium was closed because it lacked the essential permits and minimum legal infrastructures, but also on the basis of alleged mistreatment of the dolphins kept in the facility.

Several other dolphinaria still exist in Europe and in particular in Italy. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that with the continuation of campaigns led by the abovementioned organizations, many of those captivity facilities, which under many aspects operate illegally, might eventually be closed as well.

However, a major impediment to the continuation of a forceful campaign to terminate dolphin captivity in Europe is the lack of appropriate destinations for the dolphins seized by the authorities as a result of dolphinaria being closed, where these mammals can either be rehabilitated in view of their release at sea, if conditions apply (IUCN 1998, Moore et al. 2007), or hosted indefinitely in the best possible and most natural conditions. For instance, the four dolphins seized from the Rimini Dolphinarium since 2013 are hosted in the Genoa Aquarium, which is the best solution currently available. Genoa has now reached maximum capacity and no other solution is in sight in the short-medium term.

A programme of work is proposed here to investigate the feasibility of establishing a facility in the Italian coastal zone where captive dolphins not only from Italy but also and Southern Europe and, more generally, from the ACCOBAMS¹ area, can be hosted indefinitely in conditions that are as close as possible to these animals' natural habitats, and where, if possible, rehabilitation and release procedures can be implemented on the basis of the ACCOBAMS

1 ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area) aims at reducing threats to cetaceans in Mediterranean and Black Sea waters and improving our knowledge of these animals.

guidelines².

Such facility could also support any possible rehabilitation efforts of wild dolphins that strand alive. In such circumstances, when a rescue and release back to the wild is impossible within few days from the stranding event, a major problem that rescuers must face is locating a place where the dolphin is given even a minimum hope of surviving and recovery during the initial critical days, and undergoes rehabilitation. This is a rather thorny problem the Italian environment authorities must face several times per year. Establishing a dolphin refuge is therefore likely to be seen quite favourably by the Italian Government, also to address the live stranding issue.

The limited capacity of dolphinaria reinforces the need for a Dolphin Refuge. At present dolphinaria undertake breeding programs and often receive dolphins from other facilities despite the space available in the tanks being limited. This causes a flow of dolphins from a facility to another, often located in different countries. When a dolphinarium shuts down or its dolphins are seized by the public authorities, it is practically impossible to locate a permanent accommodation for the animals. The idea of a Dolphin Refuge in Italy, presented here as a pilot project in Europe³, will hopefully help lay the foundations for best practices in cetacean care, as part of the process of transitioning from a time in which it was considered normal to keep dolphins in captivity to a new era in which captivity has progressively become a practice of the past. Furthermore, it is hoped that the idea might set a precedent that could be replicated in other parts of the world.

This document aims at contributing to the development of international standards on sea sanctuaries and refuges for dolphins.

2 Resolution 3.20. Guidelines on the release of cetaceans in the wild. Report of the 3rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area). Dubrovnik (Croatia), 22-25 October 2007.

3 An additional refuge or "sanctuary" is also being considered in European waters as a partnership project between Whale and Dolphin Conservation and Merlin Entertainments: <http://uk.whales.org/news/2009/03/wdcs-to-work-with-merlin-entertainments-on-better-future-for-captive-dolphins>

RECONSIDERING THE ETHICS OF DOLPHIN CAPTIVITY

The earliest known instance of a cetacean displayed in captivity concerns a beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*) exposed at the Boston Aquaria Gardens in 1861. Bottlenose dolphins were first exposed in Florida in 1938. Since then, several other dolphinariums were built in the USA and later, in the 1960s, in Europe. At present more than 50 countries, including also in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Russia, host dolphinarium facilities.

Despite all species of dolphins being listed in Appendices I and II of CITES which limits their international trade and, in the case of EU CITES legislation prohibits their trade for commercial purposes, most dolphins exposed in the world's dolphinariums are wild-sourced and are commercially used as entrainment. The long-term sustainability of the world's captive industry still relies on wild-caught dolphins.

However things are beginning to change. For example:

- In Europe the public acceptance of the use of wild animals for entertainment is dramatically decreasing. Dolphinariums are perceived by an increasing fraction of public opinion as a thing of the past, and are likely to become unpopular and less fashionable at least in Western Europe. According to the latest opinion polls run by Eurispes in Italy, more than 70% of citizens are in favour of a ban on animals in circuses and more than 45% in dolphinariums. The public intolerance towards dolphinariums is particularly relevant considering that NGO campaigns in Italy against dolphins in captivity have been run only for the past four years.

- In September 2014 the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), at their 11th Conference, adopted a Resolution on the live captures of cetaceans from the wild, requesting Parties to prohibit: (i) live capture from the wild, (ii) imports and international transit of all cetaceans for commercial purposes.

- Some entertainment companies such as the international group Merlin have lately issued an ethical statement to justify discontinuing the hosting

of captive dolphins in their facilities.

- A few dolphinariums in USA and Europe are currently registering a decline in business and decided to close down or have shown their willingness to give away their dolphins to a Sea Refuge. For example, in 2016 Sarkanniemi (Tampere), the only dolphinarium existing in Finland, decided to shut down because of low attendance and related financial crush; in 2014 the Baltimore Aquarium announced their will to start looking into a possible sea sanctuary where to transfer their dolphins acknowledging the poor value of dolphin exhibition and stunt. The Italian facilities Rimini and Fasano have been shut down by public authorities in the period 2015-2016 because of lack of compliance with Italian binding requirements for dolphinariums.

- In 2016 the Group SeaWorld announced the decision to stop their breeding programs of killer whales (orcas) and importation of these animals from the wild; following the film "Blackfish" about Orcas in captivity, the company registered a dramatic decrease in public. Therefore, Orcas currently kept in Sea World's facilities are expected to be the last generation in captivity.

Maybe the next step will concern the smaller dolphin species.

During the last decades, the Italian society undertook a transformation in public attitude towards cetaceans. Today they are perceived as charismatic animals, part of our heritage. The citizens' engagement in facing stranding events proves the emergence of a strong and widespread sense of compassion towards these animals (Bearzi et al., 2010).

PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED

Finding a place where dolphins can be cared for in an appropriate way is an urgent necessity in Italy, as well as elsewhere in Europe, to address two categories of problems connected with dolphin welfare: captivity and strandings.

CAPTIVITY

The majority of the reported more than 300 captive cetaceans in the EU are bottlenose dolphins (Whale and Dolphin Conservation, 2015). Currently, in Italy, all captive cetaceans belong to this species. In 2012, there were six structures maintaining dolphins in captivity in the country and they are now reduced to three (Table 1). One of these, Gardaland, after a long series of court cases involving dolphin mistreatment under the previous ownership, decided to forego dolphin captivity because the practice was not attuned to the new owners' policy. Another, Rimini, was closed in 2013 by the Italian authorities on the grounds of infringements of national law resulting in mistreatment of the animals involved; custody of the four animals once kept in the Rimini Dolphinarium is now being granted to the Genoa Aquarium. Of the remaining commercial dolphinariums in Italy only three operate today (Genoa, Oltremare, Zoomarine), because the others have been assessed as structurally incompatible with national legal requirements (Fasano and Rimini). However, with

no suitable holding facility in Italy, or within the rest of Europe, relocation of displaced animals is problematic. Lack of appropriate space is impeding the continuation of legal action and the provision of the best possible lifestyle to animals that were deprived of their freedom.

Clearly, there seems to be an increasing receptiveness within relevant Italian authorities to develop new policies that are less accepting to the practice of keeping dolphins in confined artificial spaces, and with a surplus of captive dolphins needing alternative housing, herein lies the importance of developing a dolphin refuge project in Italy. Such a sentiment is reinforced by a requirement of the EU Zoo Directive (EC/22/1999) applying to dolphinariums stating that in the event of a zoo or part thereof being closed, the competent authority of a Member State should ensure that the animals concerned are treated or disposed of under conditions deemed appropriate and consistent with the purposes and provisions of the Directive. This also includes the adoption of measures for ex situ conservation under Article 9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (which includes rehabilitation of threatened species and reintroduction under appropriate conditions). At present, unfortunately, the only available option is to move a dolphin from one dolphinarium to another.

TABLE 1

FACILITIES HOSTING, OR HAVING HOSTED DOLPHINS IN CAPTIVITY IN ITALY

FACILITIES	DOLPHINS HOSTED (JAN 2016)	SHOWS
Acquario di Genova	11	NO SHOWS
Zoomarine, Roma	8	ONGOING
Oltremare, Cattolica	10	ONGOING
Zoosafari, Fasanolandia	0	NO SHOWS SINCE 2014
Gardaland	0	NO SHOWS SINCE 2013
Delfinario di Rimini	0	CLOSED BY DECREE

LIVE STRANDINGS

During the past 4 years (2012-2015) the strandings of 628 cetaceans were recorded in Italy (Table 2). Of these, 34 (yearly mean= 4.9) stranded alive (Banca

Dati Spiaggiamenti, BDS, consulted in January 2016⁴). Yearly mean stranding rate of alive individuals could also increase, in particular when unusual

⁴ http://mammiferimarini.unipv.it/spiaggiamenti_public.php?lang=en

TABLE 2**CETACEAN STRANDINGS RECORDED IN ITALY BETWEEN 2012-2015**

IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF STRANDINGS INVOLVING STRIPED DOLPHINS (N=129) WERE RECORDED IN 2013 AS CONSEQUENCE OF A MORBILLIVIRUS OUTBREAK. CETACEAN STRANDINGS RECORDED IN ITALY BETWEEN 2012-2015. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF STRANDINGS INVOLVING STRIPED DOLPHINS (N=129) WERE RECORDED IN 2013 AS CONSEQUENCE OF A MORBILLIVIRUS OUTBREAK.

STRIPED DOLPHIN	STENELLA COERULEOALBA	267
BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN	TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS	195
Sperm whale	Physeter macrocephalus	13
Risso's dolphin	Grampus griseus	10
Fin whale	Balaenoptera physalus	9
Long-finned pilot whale	Globicephala melas	6
Short-beaked common dolphin	Delphinus delphis	3
Curvier's beaked whale	Ziphius cavirostris	4
Undetermined		121
TOTAL		628

However, the above figure is likely to be an underestimation because in many cases animals are reported in difficult conditions close to shore to later disappear without being recorded. According to the BDS database, some of these stranded animals were released at sea, their fate unknown, while the rest of them died ashore after having been found. Assuming that many of those released at sea have also died – considering that the cause of their stranding was not investigated nor treated, and that dolphins need the protection of their group to survive – the current way of treating live strandings cannot be considered to be addressing adequately the problem of cetaceans stranded alive along the Italian seas, some of which belong to populations that have been assessed as Endangered or Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List (Notarbartolo di Sciara and Birkun 2010).

This is a very difficult issue because the current Italian legislation provides no suitable response concerning animals which are considered as non-releasable for medical and/or behavioural reasons. For instance, healthy newborns and calves and/or old specimens, which could not live independently in the open sea, can neither be released nor euthanized, and no solution is proposed to this dilemma. The recent story of Mary G, a Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) female calf stranded alive with her mother (which died after few days), is the clearest example. The animal was kept for seven years in captivity in a tank with bottlenose dolphins, used in public shows and kept under hormonal control to avoid cross-breeding. However, regardless of the legal complexities connected with dealing with the issue of rescuing wild cetaceans in distress, there is no doubt that the availability of specialised facilities and expertise offered by a dolphin refuge in Italy can serve a useful function when addressing such events

as a matter of urgency.

Both types of concern – captivity and strandings – can be more effectively addressed if a refuge facility were to be available, where the animals are maintained in best possible way, while rehabilitation is provided and – if appropriate – release at sea attempted.

There is a legislative issue that needs to be addressed in order to be able to establish a dolphin refuge in Italy. According to national legal framework, facilities dedicated to captive animals and those dedicated to rescued wild cetaceans are regulated to different laws (respectively D. legs. 73/2005 and D.M. 469/2001 D. legs. 157/92). Due to different legislation and for safety reasons, structures dedicated to animal under human care will be different to those planned for wild animals rehabilitation.

In conclusion, the establishment of a refuge facility for dolphins is proposed in Italy based on the following reasons:

- a) to address the impending problem of hosting dolphin individuals currently held in several captivity facilities still existing in Italy, which may be phased out in the future, also due the development of Italian and European legislation on the matter;
- b) to support the Italian national stranding network that is forced to deal yearly with a minimum of half dozen live strandings;
- c) the centrality of Italy in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, which could increase the refuge facility's usefulness beyond Italy's borders.

This document argues for the need of developing a feasibility study to explore the idea in further detail and facilitate the future implementation of a dolphin refuge in Italy.

ELEMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN A FEASIBILITY STUDY

The feasibility study will place an emphasis on the scientific, technical, societal and practical issues connected with the establishment of a dolphin refuge facility in Italy; aspects related to the economic, legal and governance issues of the specific site identified will be the subject of only a preliminary assessment, while specific issues related to the financial sustainability of the refuge will have to be addressed in a subsequent, ad hoc effort. It is proposed that such study is coordinated by the Tethys Research Institute and, in addition, benefits from the contribution of an international Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee will be composed of US, UK and Italian leading experts in the following fields:

- Ecology and behaviour expertise of bottlenose dolphins; their ecological and ethological requirements, e.g., in terms of space, depth, seasonal temperature range, water quality (salinity, purity), ambient noise, social structure, activity patterns;
- odontocete husbandry (e.g., food, medical care, handling, transportation);
- veterinary medicine focused on marine mammals;
- stranding, rescue, captive rehabilitation and release techniques and procedures;
- structural, functional and logistic aspects of the prospective hosting facility;
- ecological impact assessment of concerned marine environments;
- economic assessment of the sustainability of the proposed project and the operational costs of the centre, once established;
- development of educational, awareness and research potential offered by the facility;
- relationships with the main stakeholders: public administration, enforcement, human health issues, environmental issues, legal issues.

A review study of similar facilities in other parts of the world dedicated to cetaceans will be performed, with a SWOT⁵ analysis of the various cases, and lessons to be learned from such experiences to assist in the specific case of a dolphin refuge established in the Southern European/Mediterranean region.

The feasibility study will dedicate special attention to the following elements: facility location selection,

5 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

cetacean housing issues, minimum facility components, staff, veterinary and nutritional care, management policies, and governance orientations.

4.1. SELECTING THE RIGHT PLACE

On the basis of the criteria listed below (which might be amended or complemented as new evidence or issues arise during the feasibility study), a first list of possible locations in Italy will be presented, where the establishment of a dolphin refuge could be considered. Locations will be presented in a comparative setting with an investigation into the suitability of identified locations, and although the location list will be based on technical, scientific and logistic criteria, consideration will be also given to potential economic advantages of the facilities (e.g., proximity to potential visitor concentrations, etc.).

Criteria to be satisfied include:

- 1. Site characteristics related to the nature of the animals.** Sites must possess the requirements to ensure the well-being of the animals on the basis of their ecology, behaviour and physiology.
- 2. Site topography.** A facility might be considered to be placed either in a sheltered, shallow and semi-enclosed body of marine water such as a small bay or fjord, or in a coastal lagoon where appropriate enclosures can be fenced. The latter will be particularly relevant not only for the cost of the initial set up, but also for the greater flexibility in terms of surface area, and of the greater ease of maintenance.
- 3. Availability of services** such as power, telecommunication, running water, heating, waste treatment.
- 4. Ease of access and connectivity.** Reaching the site should be easy through roads in good conditions to facilitate the arrival of heavy vehicles delivering materials, animals and visitors. The presence of an airport within a <100 km radius will also be an asset.
- 5. Security and quietness of the surrounding land and sea.** Access should be controlled to guarantee the safety and well-being of the dolphins and prevent

unwanted human interaction. Nearby vessel traffic and other disturbances will have to be regulated and limited. Inclusion of the facility within an existing and well-managed coastal or marine protected area may offer the possibility of using available infrastructures such as a visitor or education centre and interpretation facilities and services.

6. Contiguity of site with wild dolphin natural habitat.

Although the nearby presence of wild dolphin habitat testifies to the appropriateness of the selection, possible negative effects of interactions between wild and captive cetaceans (e.g., foreign pathogen contamination, genetic contamination of escaped animals) must be carefully addressed.

4.2. CETACEAN HOUSING ISSUES

The cetacean housing will depend on the characteristics of the selected site, and therefore will have to be designed in a case-by-case basis. Basic characteristics to be considered include:

- adequate surface area to host the maximum expected number of dolphins at any time;
- dolphin habitat surface to be dynamically (modularly) structured, to enable modifications to accommodate to need (e.g., separating aggressive individuals and allowing less dominant animals to escape conflict), including: interconnected pens to allow shifting of animals and flexibility of social groupings; quarantine pens of appropriate size and number; holding/medical pens to facilitate animal restraint for medical procedures or preparation for transport. Shade provided over shallow pens and slide out platforms. Pens, equipment and facilities will be differentiated to host captive and wild animals in order to respect existing legal framework;
- adequate space to allow the exercise of natural behaviour (e.g., chasing live fish, socializing, swimming and diving);
- appropriate depth range for bottlenose dolphins, including access to shallower areas for veterinary treatment and monitoring;
- appropriate environmental characteristics (e.g., daily and seasonal water temperature ranges, water salinity, water quality, air quality, noise levels);
- adequate water turnover and circulation.

4.3. MINIMUM FACILITY COMPONENTS

In addition to the space dedicated to the dolphins, the following will also be considered:

- office space and personnel housing;
- husbandry (including a kitchen for the preparation

of dolphin food), medical and basic research facilities;

- surveillance and security system network;
- boats for basic on-water operations;
- basic diving facilities for underwater operations;
- observation platforms and a system of cameras to allow unobtrusive monitoring (by management and/or by visitors);
- education/interpretation centre with multimedia resources providing information on the biology of the animals, their conservation needs as well as the rationale dictating the need for dolphin refuges.

4.4. STAFF

The feasibility study will provide a list of the personnel needed to run the facility. These will include a permanent staff with the necessary expertise in the fields of husbandry, veterinary medicine, education, administration, security, maintenance (including underwater), boat operation.

Considering the potential of the refuge for unobtrusive, respectful science, research proposals will be welcomed and reviewed by a scientific committee, in order to facilitate studies to be conducted by outside scientists and students, under the supervision of the refuge management.

4.5. VETERINARY AND NUTRITIONAL CARE

A proper nutritional program will be evaluated for animals coming from controlled environment, according to national laws. A dedicated program involving local fishermen could be implemented considering local fish species, in order to adapt the dolphins to more natural conditions. Nutritional status will be monitored by veterinary personnel.

The veterinary staff will be part of the permanent staff following the health status of animals coming from human care by regular examinations with shared and approved protocols. Dedicated personnel should be considered exclusively for stranded animals. Veterinarians with specific skills and experience will be selected and they will implement dedicated medical, safety, prophylactic and monitoring protocols and programmes, trying to avoid massive usage of chemotherapeutic drugs. Veterinary personnel working with wild animals will be part of the existing stranding network and will operate in accordance with the existing guidelines.

4.6. POLICIES

Detailed policies related to the governance and management of the refuge will be developed at later stage. Issues involved are often delicate and involve ethical aspects as well as legal constraints. Some of the main policy issues to be considered include:

- **Animals in the refuge.** The refuge will host dolphins originating from the captivity industry and, whenever needed and possible, dolphins that have been rescued after stranding. The refuge should be considered a permanent accommodation for all animals deemed to be unfit for release. Therefore, its long-term sustainability must be assured to every possible extent.

- **Acquisition and release.** Captive dolphins can derive from a variety of legal conditions: seizure, confiscation, voluntarily cession from a dolphinarium (e.g. closure of the facility or reduction in number of animals). Dolphins can derive from facilities based in Italy or other European and Mediterranean countries. Stranded Mediterranean dolphins in need of prolonged rehabilitation can be cared for and released back to the sea whenever the conditions are deemed favourable by the appropriate expertise.

- **Reintroductions.** Current legislation allows for the reintroduction of specimens from local populations under certain circumstances and provided the animals would not be dependent on human care and therefore able to survive in the wild (this is also valid for captive dolphins). The Convention on Biological Diversity promotes the need to 'reintroduce threatened species into their natural habitats under appropriate conditions' (art 9.c). Moreover, the EU Habitats Directive states that measures shall be designed to maintain or 'restore', at favourable consideration status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of community interest (art. 2.2). The reintroduction of species, considered as a conventional conservation tool, would fall within the scope of the article, while the reintroduction of alien species should be avoided under all circumstances. Policies concerning eventual reintroductions into the wild will be based on the IUCN (1998) and ACCOBAMS (2007) Reintroduction Guidelines, to ensure that proposed plans are in line and compatible with internationally recognised guidance as well as common sense. Possible reintroduction of captive animals will be planned in cooperation with the concerned authorities in order to obtain the needed permits.

- **Non-breeding policy.** A non-breeding policy based on contraception, gender separation or a mix of both, will be applied.

- **Euthanasia.** Under Italian law euthanasia is currently foreseen only after medical evaluation based on compassionate reasons associated with

incurable physical health conditions.

- **Visitors.** The refuge will allow, under certain conditions, the presence of visitors. Dolphin observation will be encouraged through using remote technologies (e.g., webcams, advantaged land-observation points). Educational programs will be conducted to inform the public about the implications and consequences of captivity as well as promoting research programs on the rehabilitation and, when possible, the release of dolphins at sea.

4.7. REFUGE'S GOVERNANCE

The refuge's governance will also be envisaged during the feasibility study, possibly as a not-for-profit Consortium of public, private and not-for-profit subjects. The role and juridical status of the management body will also be defined. Connections with local eco-tourist activities may be envisaged. An important element of governance will be its relation with the refuge's long-term economic sustainability. Fundraising must be compatible with solid ethical criteria.

Finally, a range of specialised organisations that could be engaged in collaborating with the facility to help it reaching its goal and objectives should be explored.

ORGANISATIONS

CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN PROMOTING A REFUGE FOR DOLPHINS ITALY



Marevivo was founded in 1985. Since then has been fighting for the protection of the sea and its resources. Over the years created a complex network of relationships with institutions, citizens and national and international bodies. For its activities in Italy and abroad, it has the support of scientific and legal committees, territorial delegations, a divers division and a well-organized network of volunteers and members. Its activities, projects and campaigns in defence of the marine environment are carried out with the support of institutions and private companies. Activities by Marevivo include biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, enhancement and promotion of marine protected areas, combating pollution and illegal fishing and environmental education.

marevivo.it



Founded in 1977, LAV is a leading Italian national animal protection organisation also working on environmental issues. LAV promotes a cultural change in the way we relate to non-human animals, with a view to achieving a lifestyle and making political choices based on respect for and solidarity towards all living beings, irrespective of their species. The goal is to work towards ending the exploitation and suffering of animals by promoting public campaigns and new legislation. Every year, thanks to its legal team, LAV initiates about 500 legal actions to pursue the recognition of animal rights, some of which culminate in important court rulings addressing a consistent change in the way animals are treated today. LAV actively works on the issue on wild animals also by promoting the correct implementation of existing legislation. LAV is part of international networks such as Eurogroup for Animals and in 2013 LAV launched a dolphin anti-captivity campaign by joining S.O.S Dolphins. It is a founder of Dolphinarium Free Europe (DFE), a network of organisation working to end dolphinarium in the EU.

lav.it



The Tethys Research Institute, founded in 1986, is a non-profit research organisation dedicated to the preservation of the marine environment and its biodiversity, with a focus on cetaceans of the Mediterranean Sea. The Institute has its headquarters in Milano, Italy, in the premises of the City Aquarium, and has a field base in Vonitsa, Greece, where conducts a long-term research project on wild coastal dolphins. Its professional approach to research, which includes studies of cetaceans in the Mediterranean and Red Sea, Mediterranean monk seals, and Mediterranean devil rays, has made it one of the leading organisations in its field. Tethys has produced over 300 peer-reviewed scientific contributions and has spearheaded the creation in 1999 of the Pelagos Sanctuary for Mediterranean Marine Mammals, which was based on the Institute's research findings and vision. With a core team of approximately 30 collaborators, Tethys has involved thousands of people from all over the world in its citizen-science programs. The Institute is exclusively based on autonomous fundraising.

tethys.org

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