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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

37<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 5-8 December 2017

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**6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Group of Experts on the  
Conservation of Wild Birds**

Sliema (Malta), 21 June 2017

**- REPORT OF THE MEETING -**

*Document prepared by  
the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation*

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on the Conservation of Wild Birds which took place on 21 June 2017 in Sliema (Malta);
- Thank the national authorities of Malta for the excellent hosting of the meeting;
- Take note of the decision by the Group to review its mandate and develop a Framework Programme of Work (FPoW) with clear expected outcomes, to be debated at its next meeting;
- Take note of the proposals made for the future work priorities for the Group and based on the discussions on the added value of the Convention on wild birds' conservation.

## **1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE CHAIR AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Chair of the Group of Experts, Mr Rastislav Rybanic welcomed participants to the series of meetings dedicated to bird species' conservation, to take place during the three following days. He warmly thanked the Maltese authorities for the kind invitation to host these important meetings and wished all participants productive and smooth discussions.

Mr Sergei Golovkin, Chair of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal points for illegal killing of birds, welcomed all participants in Malta on behalf of the Maltese authorities. He offered his and all his team's kind assistance to all participants if need be and hopes the meetings will run well and will reach all their expected results.

## **2. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FRAME OF THE BERN CONVENTION SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS**

The Secretariat reminded the participants of [past and current work of the Convention](#) and the Group of Experts, as well as of the most recently adopted Recommendations and standards related to bird species conservation.

## **3. UPDATES ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE CONSERVATION OF BIRDS IN OTHER FORA**

In a series of presentations, participants got updated on the different activities implemented by other international Conventions, Agreements and partner organisations on wild bird's conservation.

They got acquainted with AEWA's European Goose Management Platform, initiating a transition from single species management approach towards a multi-species one, the Working Group coordinating and the implementation of the Platforms objectives and its International Data Centre, which can effectively collate information for all European goose populations.

Participants for further informed on current [CMS avian projects](#), including the various operating Working Groups and Task Forces, established Action Plans and proposals for new listings of species in the Convention's appendices, to be considered at the upcoming CMS COP 12.

The representative of the European Commission reminded of the EU Action Plan for Nature, people and the economy and underlined its very recent adoption was the result of two and half years of work in the process named the Fitness Check of the EU Nature Directives.

EURONATUR provided participants with an update on the state of implementation of their [Adriatic Flyway programme](#) and current activities such as capacity building and workshops aimed at strengthening networking and cooperation of local actors and NGOs, as well as most recent publications and future activities.

FACE equally updated participants with on the [organisation current activities](#) in relation to the EU Action Plan and Bern Convention's Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity and their upcoming events in relation to the eradication of illegal killing of birds.

In a **discussion following the updates received**, BirdLife Europe presented their most recent activities for the protection of migratory birds and stressed that the Bern Convention should follow the processes related to the protection of the Barnacle Goose, which is also fully protected under Appendix II and is a non huntable species.

## **4. SPECIES ACTION PLANS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

Participants further received a comprehensive overview of the current work by the [AEWA on their Species Action and Management Plans](#), including on the revision of the AEWA Species Action/Management Plan Format and main reasons behind this, on the revision, retirement or prolongation of existing AEWA International Action Plans and on the current development of 5 new/revised action and management plans (White-headed Duck, Dalmatian Pelican, Barnacle Goose, Greylag Goose and Velvet Scoter), expected to be adopted at the next Meeting of AEWA Parties in 2018.

The European Commission informed of the importance of the SAPs for the achievement of the EU Biodiversity Strategy objectives. Therefore, the EU strongly supports their development, including financially through the LIFE EuroSAP project. It is however important to stress that their implementation is not even among the EU member states, mainly due to the different amounts of financial and human resources countries can deploy. Therefore, countries need support, including guidance on how to implement the Plans.

**Birdlife Europe presented the state of play of implementation of the [LIFE EuroSAP project](#), as 9 out of the 16 species concerned by the project have their SAPs currently being finalised. One of the most important features of the project is the launching of the SAP tracking tool which is not fully operational: [www.trackingactionplans.org](http://www.trackingactionplans.org).** The final project event will take place at the end of April/early May 2018 in Brussels.

A major feature of the project is the creation of a European Species Coordination Group, to be working as a platform for coordination between the 5 legal frameworks operating on bird conservation – European Union, CMS, Raptors MoU, AEWA and Bern Convention. BirdLife International is supposed to take in charge the Secretariat work of the Group and the Terms of reference of the Group are under preparation. One of the main tasks of the Group will be to propose and agree on priority species to deal with through the SAPs.

During a **discussion session on challenges in the implementation of Species Action Plans**, on possible gaps and cooperation needs, the Group identified the following issues, where action at international level might be reveal effective:

**On the link between SAPs, NAPs and local implementation:**

- The links between NAPs and SAPs have to be clearly identified and the need for the development of further NAPs carefully researched into. Nevertheless, capacities to implement the SAPs at national level are not equal and many countries need assistance in order to effectively implement them;
- The update and preparation of SAPs is extensive and very time consuming work, therefore, it is advisable that research is conducted on why it is working for some species and not that well for others;
- When huntable species are concerned, the issue of the sustainability of the species across the range states of the species should be discussed, possibly at international level;
- Ways to enhance political commitment to the SAPs should be looked into, as the Plans are not legally binding and depend on the political commitment towards them at national level.

**On the Multispecies Action and Management Plans:**

- Multispecies approach is innovative, but further work is necessary on improving the system in order to include country specific details, issues and action required. Thus at a later stage, the international coordination/supervision could be better ensured;
- The Bern Convention and the EC are urged to use the new AEWA Format for International Single SAPs and MSAPs as a standard template from now. The CMS is already using the Format.

**On international coordination:**

- The necessity for having a structure for coordinating the many actors' efforts (AEWA, CMS, Bern, EU) is clear. The European Coordination Group foreseen in the Life EuroSAP project could be beneficial. The NGOs have an important role to play in helping remove these potential challenges.
- A focus on mainstreaming bird conservation should be operated, in particular on agriculture and forestry and within the EU's sectorial policies and funding mechanisms. An even stronger focus should be put into engaging with stakeholders in appropriate sectors.

- The international level also has a role to play in the capacity building, thorough facilitating the – to be better learn from doing and from bad experiences through collective learning.
- The coordination of the work at international level should be ensured also through the various WGs on Energy, poisoning, IKB, etc.

## **5. FOLLOW-UP OF BERN CONVENTION COMPLAINTS CONCERNING BIRD CONSERVATION IN EUROPE**

### **5.1 Complaints on stand-by 2014/3: Presumed deliberate killing of birds in Serbia and 2016/3: Alleged deliberate killing of birds of prey in Serbia**

The national authorities presented a [detailed report on the efforts put in place](#) to coordinate the fight against the illegal bird killing phenomena in their country. The [Pannon Eagle LIFE project](#) and its planned activities in Serbia were further presented. The Group debated various approaches and possible actions which could be implemented by the national authorities:

- a) Develop a Toolbox of international and national law and regulations which can be used when fighting the IKB phenomena at national level
- b) Engage with the THEMIS Network and IMPEL to seek their advice and support
- c) Enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries, including in the frame of the Pannon Eagle Life project
- d) Strengthen the implementation of preventive measures, particularly against the use of pesticides and illegal baits, for instance making use of trained dogs, following the successful Italian and Spanish experiences
- e) Ensure a sufficient annual budget is foreseen for the analyses of dead bird carcasses

### **5.2 Complaint on stand-by 2014/6: Wind Energy Izmir (Turkey)**

The national authorities of Turkey presented a report on the status of development of wind energy installations in the Izmir peninsula in Turkey, on the EIA studies they are implementing, on the obligatory three-year monitoring and on the eventual migratory routes passing though the areas impacted by the energy developments.

Various approaches and possible actions to be implemented by the national authorities of Turkey were identified during the meeting discussions:

- a) Consider strengthening cooperation with the Birdlife partner at national level as the wind energy installations in concerned area, apparently not on a major route for migratory birds, could have an impact on populations of other bird species
- b) The national Birdlife partner offers to provide information, using their own sensitivity mapping methods, on which other bird species could be concerned
- c) Consider discussing monitoring and mitigation measures with stakeholders and national NGO organisations, every time large numbers of the wind farms are developed, including in the Çeşme area.

Both complaints are going to discussed gain at the September meeting of Bureau to the Convention and new reporting requests are most probably going to be addressed to the authorities.

## **6. MANDATE OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS AND NEXT MEETING OF THE GROUP**

The Group also debated the added value of Bern Convention action on the issue of wild birds' conservation in a complex landscape where many actors and institutions intervene.

The Bern Convention was mentioned a frontrunner in many issues linked to birds' conservation in the past, later taken on board by other actors.

The Group debated the possibility to use the Group of Experts as a catalyst for thinking on new emerging issues and as a coordination mechanism for Contracting Parties, feeding into the work of

other groups under other instruments, such as Flyways Groups, Energy Working Group, Poisoning Group, Renewables Group, etc.

Several proposals were made for future work priorities for the Group, based on the discussions on the added value of the Convention:

- Control on the potential impact of derogations (Article 9 of the BC) on the conservation status of the species concerned, possibly in cooperation with the EC. The need for the development of one standardised database was mentioned, which would allow to assess/analyse the potential impact of the derogations.
- The necessity of a revision of the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity was mentioned.
- The possibility for the Bern Convention to ensure a stronger link and to be a platform for cooperation between EU member states with non-EU countries in Europe along species flyways;
- The leading role of the Convention on the IKB issue Continue, through the Tunis AP was mentioned as a priority;
- Continue intervening, when the Bureau considers it important, to screen case-files dealing with bird conservation issues and advise the Bureau. It provides opportunity for Cps concerned to discuss the cases in international context, learn from other countries' experiences and debate possible issues of transborder cooperation with the neighbouring countries
- Continuation of the work of the Convention on power lines and birds, including new developments and challenges linked to renewable energy developments;
- Continue to allow the discussion of bird species' related complaints to the Convention, keep advising the Standing Committee on these matters and offer a platform for cooperation between authorities and stakeholders on these complaints;
- Dedicate space to discuss capacity-building not only within the Group itself, but also at national level, as implementation depends on the capacity and awareness of the stakeholders and local actors in most of the cases;
- Mainstreaming work in other sectors, agriculture and bird conservation, transport and bird conservation, forestry and bird conservation, etc.

The group of Experts agreed that the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Chair of the Group of Experts, should prepare a revised mandate of the group, accompanied by a draft Framework Programme of Work (FPoW). The draft FPoW of the Group should be more specific on the areas of future work of the Group and, where possible, specific outcomes' oriented. The Group of Experts could debate the draft of the WPoW electronically ahead of the new meeting of the Group, where it could be finalised. This will allow the Convention Standing Committee to decide on how often the Group should meet, according to the expected outcomes.

## **7. ELECTIONS OF A NEW CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS**

The Group unanimously re-elected Mr Rastislav Rybanic as Chair of the Group of Experts and Mr François Lamarque as Vice-Chair of the Group.

## Appendix



**BERN CONVENTION**  
**6<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SELECT GROUP OF EXPERTS ON CONSERVATION OF WILD BIRDS**

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017  
Sliema (Malta)

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