Strasbourg, 4th of March 2024 **T-PVS/Inf(2024)07**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

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Development of Important Herpetofauna Areas

Survey responses by Parties to the Bern Convention

Response overview

	Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)	If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)	or do you need more information first to come to an answer?
Armenia	Yes	Yes	(no)[1]
Belgium	Yes	Yes	No
Croatia	Yes[2]	Yes[3]	(no)
Czech Republic	No	No	(no)
Estonia	Yes	Yes	(no)
France	Yes	Yes	(no)
Germany	No	No	(no)
Hungary	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lichtenstein	No	No	(no)
Moldova	Yes	Yes	(no)
Monaco	No	No	(no)
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	No
Poland	Yes	Yes	(no)
Slovak Republic	Undecided	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	Yes	Yes	No
Türkiye	Yes	Yes	(no)
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes[4]	Yes
Statistics	70.58% in favour **12/17** answered **Yes** 23.52% against **4/17** answered **No** 5.9% are undecided	76.5% in favour **13/17** answered **Yes** 23.5% against **4/16** answered **No**	17.6% asked for more information **3/17** answered **Yes**

Armenia

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Up to now, the Important Herpetofauna Areas have not been outlined. The establishment of Important Herpetofauna Areas is urgent and important for the conservation of biodiversity in Armenia. This is due to the limited mobility of reptiles compared to birds and mammals, and the very restricted areas of their habitats, many of which are outside protected areas. For critically endangered species like

[1] (no) - no direct answer was given, answer inferred;
[2] While Croatia does not need additional analysis on the subject, it supports the initiative so other parties to the Bern Convention can profit from it (see answer in Croatia section of the questionnaire answers);
[3] See above;
[4] The UK answered Yes and No to the 2nd question (see answer in the UK section of the questionnaire answers).

Phrynocephalus horvathi, Eremias pleskei, Parvilacerta parva, and others saving their habitats from exploitation is the only opportunity for their survival.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

General analysis at the European level would be helpful. Currently, we have only a few scientific publications on some species made at this scale.

Belgium

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Oui, à tous les niveaux, et avec des explications quant aux critères utilisés pour les déterminer. Nous avons ceci dit, une idée des sites les plus importants au niveau régional, mais il est intéressant d'avoir un regard extérieur, à l'échelle nationale et européenne en particulier (au niveau mondial, il est douteux que nous possédions des sites d'importance pour l'herpétofaune) …

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Oui, clairement !

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

Ce n'est pas nécessaire

Croatia

Following the questions raised in order to contribute to the developing Important Herpetofauna Areas hereby we would like to inform you that The Republic of Croatia has already taken steps in relation to areas important for herpetofauna, and also, important areas for most herpetofauna species are part of the Croatian Natura 2000 network.

One herpetological reserve is proclaimed in the year 2022. which covers two Croatian Natura 2000 sites (HR2000947 Gornji Majkovi – lokve and HR2000555 Lokva in Prljevići).

Therefore, Croatia does not see the need for additional analysis in order to define these areas but we support this initiative of the Convention for the signatories who see the need for further analysis in their respective national territory.

Czech Republic

In reply to the questions on Important Herpetofauna Areas, please note that detailed and systematic biodiversity monitoring has been ongoing on long-term basis in the Czech Republic (mainly by the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic). We are therefore already aware of the areas that are important in terms of herpetofauna (with highest diversity, important habitats or where rare species are present).

Further general information on biodiversity monitoring in the Czech Republic is available here: https://nature.cz/web/en/biodiversity-monitoring-and-data and the database is accessible here:

https://portal.nature.cz/nd/ (only in Czech).

Estonia- 4 -

We have discussed this idea with Estonian herpetologists, and we do feel that developing the Important Herpetofauna Areas of Europe would be helpful for our work as well as it possibly adding additional international pressure to conserve these areas in Estonia.

So, Estonia supports the idea of going forward with this work. We would suggest doing the work at European / Bern Convention level based on the national information. If other countries have proposed different levels, we are of course open for discussion on this.

France

La réponse de la France sera oui, (au niveau national cela existe déjà en France), donc idéalement au niveau européen.

Germany

Germany has 33 native Herpetofauna species. These are in our view covered sufficiently by national conservation laws and the EU-habitats directive. Hence, there is no need for Germany to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are.

Hungary

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Yes, definitely. As for the methodology used to designate the Important Areas, the scale of the grid applied in the survey to be conducted to produce the initial database will be crucial. A larger scale, such as a 10x10 km UTM grid will reveal a more general overview of the area in terms of biodiversity, whereas a smaller scale will show the actual species diversity of a certain habitat. Moreover, the importance of a habitat or area can be determined by the occurrence of one rare and endangered species as well.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Yes, a general analysis can serve as a base for the national assessment. However, as the Mediterranean is foreseen to be the most diverse region compared to other regions, assessments should be carried out in each biogeographical region in Europe to avoid overseeing potential IHAs in less diverse biogeographical regions.

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

Further information will be welcome, also on the aim and the practical use of the designation of the IHAs. A potential benefit of IHAs can be the designation of new protected areas based on the IHA, or the implementation of specific conservation and/or management measures in the Important Areas even if they are incorporated in larger protected areas.

Lichtenstein

For Liechtenstein, the important areas for herpetofauna are very well recorded and known. From our point of view, we therefore neither need help nor is a European analysis necessary. I would like to refer you to two publications as evidence for my statements:

https://www.llv.li/serviceportal2/amtsstellen/amt-fuer-umwelt/publikationen/naturkindliche-forschung/amphibien-2011.pdf

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https://www.llv.li/serviceportal2/amtsstellen/amt-fuer-umwelt/publikationen/naturkindliche-forschung/b23-reptilien.pdf

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Moldova

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Yes, it would be very helpful, but such Areas are not designated at the moment at the national level.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

We know the exact distribution of herpetofauna species, but for exact data on a 10x10 scale a complex assessment is necessary. We have done such an assessment on a 25x25 scale about 12 years ago and the data were published in the Atlas of vertebrate species (Munteanu et al., 2013)

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

At the moment we have information about species occurrence and distribution. As to the number, more data are needed for rare species.

Monaco

Faisant suite à votre mail relatif à l'herpétofaune, je vous informe que ces espèces font l'objet d'un inventaire à Monaco dont la dernière mise à jour date de 2022.

Concernant l'étude proposée, elle ne semble pas justifiée à l'échelle du territoire monégasque.

Afin de contribuer à votre programme, les résultats des inventaires peuvent vous être communiqués si nécessaire.

Netherlands

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

We have an overview of important areas for herpetofauna, but these determined through N2000 Annex II species – which is a limitation. Having an overview of all important herp areas for all herpeto species can support conservation efforts at NL level.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Determining an accepted and shared methodology for IHA's at European level makes it more robust. It also aligns with many international frameworks and goals set on biodiv conservation.

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

No.

Poland

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Yes, it would be helpful to know what are the Important Herpetofauna Areas at Global, European and National level.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Yes, the first analysis for Europe can be general.

Slovak Republik

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Identification of Important Herpetofauna Areas might help to improve the knowledge as the basis of further conservation measures. Before final decision we prefer to continue the discussion within the Bern Convention as well as with specialists at the national level, too.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Such a scale is the good basis for the very initial identification.

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

More information would be helpful, such as planned monitoring, reporting, etc. We are ready to provide names of experts in this field. The contact persons at this moment are Jana Durkošová and Michaela Mrázová.

Switzerland

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Oui, ce travail pourrait être utile pour

- regarder la conservation des amphibiens d'un point de vue mondial et européen et
- améliorer la conservation des reptiles dans notre pays.

1) Amphibiens :

Sur les 19 espèces d'amphibiens évaluées en Suisse dans le cadre des **listes rouges**, 15 (**79 %**) se trouvent sur la liste rouge selon les critères de l'Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature. Il s'agit d'un des groupes d'organismes les plus menacés de Suisse avec les characées, les cigales et les reptiles. Ces groupes compte peu d'espèces et sont attachés à des milieux soit aquatiques/très humides, soit au contraire très secs (voir synthèse des listes rouges).

Vu la situation des amphibiens, la Suisse a mis sous protection en 2001 les **sites de reproduction de batraciens d'importance nationale** (RS 451.34 OBat). Cet inventaire national comprend des objets fixes et des objets itinérants. Étant donné que les **objets fixes** constituent des sites de reproduction appropriés et de qualité pour les batraciens et qu'ils servent de points d'appui garantissant aux espèces de batraciens menacées une survie à long terme et une possibilité d'expansion future, ils doivent être conservés intacts et la fonctionnalité des **objets itinérants** doit être préservée. La protection vise en particulier à conserver et à valoriser: a. l'objet en tant que site de reproduction de batraciens; b. les populations de batraciens qui donnent à l'objet sa valeur; c. l'objet en tant qu'élément du réseau de biotopes (Art. 6, al. 1 et 2, OBat). On n'admet des dérogations aux buts de la protection des objets fixes que pour des projets dont l'emplacement s'impose par leur destination et qui servent un intérêt public prépondérant d'importance nationale également (art. 7 OBat) ou pour d'autres cas spécifiques cités à l'article 7, al. 2.

Des sites d'importance cantonale et locale complètent le réseau de sites protégés au niveau national.

Grâce aux efforts communs mis en œuvre pour protéger les amphibiens par de nombreux acteurs différents (bénévoles, communes, cantons, Confédération et ONGs…), il semble que le recul des effectifs ait ralenti chez la plupart des espèces et qu'il se soit même arrêté chez un petit nombre d'espèces selon l'évaluation de la dernière liste rouge. Tous ces efforts doivent être poursuivis si on veut que les populations se maintiennent et même s'améliorent.

La protection des sites de reproduction des batraciens s'est construite sur la vision national, si la **vision européenne** devait également prise en compte, certains sites devraient probablement être ajoutés par exemple pour la Salamandre noire (*Salamandra atra*) qui est fréquente chez nous mais plus rare en Europe.

2) Reptiles

Parmi les seize espèces de reptiles indigènes en Suisse, 13 (plus de **80** %) figurent sur la **liste rouge**, selon les critères définis par l'Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature (UICN).

La situation des reptiles est pire que celle des amphibiens car les mesures prises pour la conservation des reptiles sont moins nombreuses. A ce jour, aucun inventaire fédérale n'a été mis en place pour protéger les sites importants au niveau national pour ces espèces.

Info fauna notre centre de données et d'information pour la faune de Suisse (hors oiseaux et chauves-souris) a délimité des « **zones prioritaires cantonales pour les reptiles** » (KRVG). Ces zones ne sont cependant pas mises sous protection.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Oui. L'échelle proposée en 10x10 est cependant un peu trop large pour notre pays. 5x5km serait plus utile mais peut-être trop compliquée à réaliser.

Cette analyse en 10x10 pourrait tout de même nous donner une indication quant aux zones importantes de Suisse du point de vue européen.

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

Non.

Türkiye

In Türkiye, as part of the "National Biodiversity Inventory and Monitoring Project" conducted between 2013-2020 with the aim of preserving the country's biological diversity, the Biological Diversity Map of whole country has been prepared. Among the important biodiversity areas in the map, herpetofauna areas also constitute a significant portion. Notably, marine turtle nesting areas stand out among these areas. Additionally, in our country, which is in the process of aligning with the *acquis communitaire*, it is clear that efforts such as the Important Herpetofauna Areas mentioned by the Bern Convention Secretariat will contribute to conservation efforts. Moreover, it is believed that conducting these efforts primarily at the European level will better guide national efforts toward a more accurate target. Furthermore, if there is more detailed information about the ultimate goals, content, budget, and the experts involved in the study, a more accurate evaluation can be made.

United Kingdom

1. *Would it help your country in respect of biodiversity conservation to know what the Important Herpetofauna Areas are in your country? (at Global/European/National level)*

Yes. ARC Trust are already developing an approach to define IHA's for the UK based on the KBA principles. In the UK, defining IHAs will be valuable for i) evaluating the 30x30 approach and whether our protected area network (SSSIs and SACs) sufficiently covers sites and features important to herpetofauna and ii) spatial conservation planning and targeted species conservation measures, for example Local Nature Recovery Strategies & Species Conservation Strategies in England.

There is a concern that existing distribution records and modelling data may not pick up potential IHAs in some parts of the UK (e.g mid-Wales and the Scottish Highlands and islands), as records are typically skewed towards areas where human populations are. Nevertheless, identification of IHA's would be beneficial for integration with the upcoming herp strategy of Scotland, and could help inform Area Statements and local/national species recovery plans in Wales. Notably, Freshwater Habitats Trust published a Preliminary Assessment of Important Areas for Ponds (IAP)s in Wales in 2007, which identifies pondscapes of importance to amphibians, including High Quality Ponds of European and National Importance.

2. *If so, would it help if first a general analysis will be done at European level? (preferably on a 10 x 10km scale)*

Yes and no – A European level analysis will be valuable for promoting the concept, defining ground rules and providing a framework for this work. In principle, it would be helpful to see how UK IHAs fit into the broader European IHA network. However, the same criteria/ thresholds (or even species) are unlikely to apply at national levels. In particular, the UK has a small number of species compared to other European countries, and some species (e.g. natterjack toad) will be threatened in the UK but not in other countries. A European analysis could therefore set a baseline and provide a framework/ hierarchy of approaches to guide 'International'/ 'National' assessments. At the European level, it may be most appropriate to identify important herpetofauna habitats, e.g. through habitat suitability modelling, which will be particularly relevant as species need to shift range in response to climate change. Due to regional differences in habitats and species, it could be beneficial to create regional sub-groups with similar species/habitats to develop common criteria and share methodologies (e.g. northern European sub-group).

Overall, a general analysis may be of relevance at country (Wales/England/Scotland/N Ireland), GB/UK and (northern) European spatial scales. However, at a more local level, this scale may be too coarse to be of material assistance from an operations perspective. The use of Species Distribution Models would

help inform the identification of potential IHAs. A European level analysis may also be useful for identifying potential collaborative efforts in herpetofauna conservation across Europe.

3. *or do you need more information first to come to an answer?*

We would suggest that providing Parties with more information on why a European analysis would be useful and how it could be used would help Parties have a common understanding of what is being proposed and better answer these questions.