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AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**PAPER ON THE BASELINE AND METHODOLOGY
FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING THE ROME STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-
2030: ERADICATING ILLEGAL KILLING, TAKING AND TRADE IN WILD BIRDS IN EUROPE
AND THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Document prepared by the CMS Convention



Joint Meeting of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean

(Online, 9 to 11 June 2021)

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FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING THE ROME STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2030: ERADICATING ILLEGAL KILLING, TAKING AND TRADE IN WILD BIRDS IN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

(Prepared by the CMS Secretariat)

Summary:

During the Joint meeting of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean held virtually from the 9th to the 11th of June 2021, the Secretariats presented a discussion paper on baseline and methodology for assessing progress toward achieving the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030. Following the Joint meeting, a written consultation has been held to gather additional ideas and viewpoints from participants to the Joint meeting. The present document is based on the results of the discussion held during the meeting and the feedback received in writing afterwards.

The MIKT Members are recommended to endorse the paper and Bern Convention SFPs are invited to support the submission of the document for its possible endorsement by the 41st Standing Committee of the Bern Convention.



The European Union was recognized as Champion Plus for their generous support and commitment towards addressing Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean for the period 2018 - 2023. This activity has been funded with the contribution granted by the European Commission under the Migratory Species Champion Programme and through the Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC Programme) Cooperation Agreements with UNEP.



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Introduction

The Rome Strategic Plan

1. The [Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030: Eradicating Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade in Wild Birds in Europe and the Mediterranean region](#) was developed as the common strategic framework of CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) and the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds (SFPs) at the second Joint meeting which took place in Rome in May 2019.

2. The Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) was officially adopted by the Bern Convention Parties at the 39th meeting of the Standing Committee in December 2019. In June 2020, after consultation via electronic means, the latest version adopted by the Bern Convention was subsequently adopted by the MIKT Member States, with the understanding that a detailed and ambitious workplan would be developed for specific actions to be implemented by MIKT Members and Observers in the Mediterranean that will capture concerns raised during the consultation – including the possibility to agree on the use of an independent monitoring mechanism to assess progress made against the workplan and combating IKB under the MIKT.

Baseline and methodology for assessing scale and scope

Requirements of the RSP

3. The RSP covers the period from 2020 to 2030 and calls for maintaining and strengthening the zero-tolerance approach to IKB, in order to bring an end to IKB within the geographical scope of the Plan. It also calls for enhancing collaboration with regional and global Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), partners and networks, to promote the eradication of IKB in all flyways. Its long-term goal is the eradication of illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds within the geographic extent of the Bern Convention and the CMS MIKT countries. The goal for the duration of the Plan, i.e. up to 2030 is the reduction of the scale and scope of illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds by at least 50% compared to a 2020 baseline.

4. The RSP sets an overarching process objective on the adoption of **National Action Plans** or other relevant document, implementation tools or mechanisms to deliver IKB reduction.

5. Additionally, the RSP sets five objectives:

Objective 1: To understand the scope, scale and motivations behind illegal killing, taking and trade of birds

Objective 2: To establish an active prevention of the illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds

Objective 3: To ensure that the illegal killing of birds is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation

Objective 4: To ensure that effective and efficient enforcement of relevant legislation is undertaken

Objective 5: To ensure effective and efficient justice for IKB-related offences

According to Objective 1.1, Action a), the countries, in consultation with stakeholders **decide on an approach for using the Scoreboard to set a baseline and a methodology for assessing progress toward achieving the Rome Strategic Plan**, as referred to in section 5.4 of the plan.

6. In line with section 5.3 of the RSP, the baseline and the methodology for the assessment of IKB are to be decided through a consultation of both CMS MIKT and Bern Convention SFP networks, including members and observers. Section 5.4 (Assessments) foresees mechanisms through which progress towards the targets of the RSP will be monitored, and lists examples such as independent research, and the periodic completion of the Scoreboard:

“To ensure the success of the Rome Strategic Plan and progress toward achieving its goal such assessments may include the following elements:

- i. Assessing the empirical measures of success through the outcomes identified by the indicators for each objective. The indicators for each of the actions of the Rome Strategic Plan establish a logical framework matrix that forms the overall composite index, allowing measuring of progress against the 2020 baseline.*
- ii. Assessments will be informed by national reporting to the Conventions, independent research and the periodic Scoreboard information as responded by countries, including other relevant information.”*

7. In the context of independent research, the RSP *inter alia* makes reference to a report by [BirdLife International published in 2015](#), which was the first overall assessment of illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds across the Mediterranean, and which stimulated some of the work that followed against IKB. According to that report and [the related peer-reviewed publication of Brochet et al \(2016\)](#)¹, which covered 26 Mediterranean and peri-Mediterranean countries, it is estimated that a number of 11 to 36 million birds may be illegally killed or taken across the Mediterranean per year. The organisation concludes therefore that on average 25 million birds may be killed or taken annually. A further study by BirdLife International ([Brochet et al 2017](#)) estimated that in northern and central Europe and the Caucasus a further 0.4–2.1 million birds may be killed or taken illegally per year.

8. [The Scoreboard](#) was adopted by the CMS Conference of the Parties at its 12th meeting (Manila, 2017), and by the Bern Convention at its 37th meeting of the Standing Committee (Strasbourg, 2017). The Scoreboard is a voluntary self-assessment tool for countries to evaluate the progress made at national and regional level in combating IKB. The first Scoreboard assessment was completed in 2018, the second one in 2020 and thereafter it is planned to be completed every three years, i.e. in 2023, 2026 and 2029.

9. The Scoreboard was considered in the drafting of the RSP and many of the Scoreboard indicators correspond to targets, actions and indicators stipulated in the Plan. The RSP refers to the Scoreboard for setting a baseline for scale and scope of IKB by 2020 (cf. Objective 1.1, Action a). Consequently, the Scoreboard plays an important role in the monitoring of the RSP.

10. The baseline mentioned in Objective 1.1 of the RSP relates to the goal of 50% reduction of the scale and scope of IKB by 2030, and therefore would correspond to a numerical value.

¹ Brochet, et al. (2016) Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean, Bird Conservation International, 26:1–28.

Monitoring IKB through the Scoreboard

11. In relation to the baseline and methodology for assessing the scale and scope of IKB, the relevant Scoreboard indicators are A1-A4² as copied below:

A. National monitoring of IKB-data management of scope and scale of IKB.

1. Status and Scale of IKB

Question: What is the quality of National data about IKB?

2. Number, distribution and trend of illegally killed, trapped or traded birds

Question: How many birds and in which season are estimated to be illegally killed, trapped or traded every year in your country including relevant overseas territories? What is the trend?

3. Extent of IKB cases known to national authorities

Question: Are data on the status and scale of IKB cases available?

4. Number of IKB cases prosecuted in the reporting period.

Question: How many IKB cases have been prosecuted in the reporting period in your country?

For questions A2 and A4, countries had the possibility to upload an excel sheet with their data in 2018 and 2020 and many of them did.

12. The indicators above do not specify a methodology for assessing scale and scope of IKB that however is required to answer consistently some of the questions and allow comparison of scoreboard data between years. This is especially true for question A2.

13. 35 out of 54 countries (MIKT members and observers and Bern Convention Special Focal Points) completed the [Scoreboard in 2018](#) and/or [2020](#). From the data submitted in 2018 and 2020, it appears that the majority of countries did not have a regular, formal system for monitoring the scale and scope of IKB, which means that there is no clear baseline or methodology for assessing the scale and scope of IKB for the purpose of assessing the implementation of the RSP. Most countries reported primarily the number of cases prosecuted (Scoreboard indicator A4), and in addition, some report estimates of IKB based on expert opinion. A few countries have more sophisticated systems in place, either based on NGO monitoring, or a combination of methods, using e.g. quantitative data and records from rehabilitation centres and combining those with reported cases of poisoned birds extrapolated to the country level. Some use the actual data, and some extrapolate. Consequently, there has been no common approach for using the Scoreboard to set a baseline and a methodology agreed yet.

The next sections of this document offer options and guidance on how to establish such baselines and methodologies.

Monitoring the scale and scope of IKB

14. In order to effectively tackle the issue of IKB in a country there needs to be a good, common understanding of what kinds of IKB are taking place in the country, which species are being affected, which methods are being used, where, when and among which groups IKB of different types is more prevalent, as well as some understanding of the motivations behind IKB.

² All other indicators in the Scoreboard (B5-E28) can be used as a baseline to assess progress but relate only indirectly to the goal of reducing IKB by 50%. For reasons of clarity, and for avoiding confusion between the different baselines, the baseline referred to in Objective 1.1 will be referred to as: "Baseline and methodology for scale and scope".

Systematic monitoring helps in tracking whether different aspects of IKB are getting better or worse over time. In this way it can contribute to monitoring effectiveness of action to address IKB, against a national baseline and indicators. It is therefore recommended for all countries without existing monitoring schemes to consider putting in place a system for monitoring IKB.

15. By definition, illegal activities cannot be easily monitored. Setting a baseline requires the adoption of a methodology for monitoring the scale and scope of IKB in a repeatable and systematic way. Activities that lead to illegal killing, taking and trading of wild birds vary extensively, and depending on the activities and illegal methods used, the methodology required for determining the scale and scope may be different. Furthermore, an agreed methodology that is followed in a systematic way on a regular basis, is crucial to reliably assess trends.

16. The kind of illegal activities that may be occurring include the following (this is a non-exhaustive list):

- Illegal shooting of birds. This includes primarily non-huntable species (i.e. species whose hunting is not allowed) according to the national legislation, but may also include huntable species hunted out of season or at times or places when it is not allowed, e.g. turtle doves in spring or thrushes on days when it is not allowed or places where it is not allowed.
- Illegal trapping of birds, using nets, lime sticks, traps, snares, cages or other methods, with or without the use of tape luring or decoys.
- Illegal poisoning of birds, either intentional (the birds are direct targets) or unintentional (the birds are indirect victims), if the bait is intended for large carnivores for example.
- Illegal nest collection, of eggs or young.

17. The motivations for these illegal activities above can also be wide ranging and include (this is a non-exhaustive list):

- Shooting for sport, personal consumption (subsistence or delicacy), sale as delicacy, taxidermy, target practice, persecution ('predator control'), damage prevention, and accidental shooting due to misidentification
- Trapping for personal consumption (subsistence or delicacy), for sale as delicacy, for taxidermy, cage bird collections, other bird collections, falconry, for lures for trapping other birds, damage prevention, and persecution ('predator control')
- Nest robbing for collection and trade, or breeding and trade
- Poisoning for persecution ('predator control')

Data availability

18. The available data on IKB in different countries, according to the country reports in the Scoreboard, vary depending on the effort of surveillance, the activity of NGOs, the wildlife rehabilitation centres, and the engagement of the public. All countries, however, seem to have easily accessible data on prosecutions and court cases.

19. The range of data sources, on numbers of birds killed, taken, or traded, that may be able to contribute to the assessment of the scale and scope of IKB, according to the Scoreboard and according to relevant data presented in the workshop organized by the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE) and CMS in Segovia, Spain, in 2018, include:

- a. Data on prosecutions and court cases. In principle, they represent a small percentage of incidences of IKB in a country and are related to the effort of enforcement and court efficiency. Nevertheless, they represent important data which provide information on means, motivations, and types of IKB in a country. The kind of data that can be interesting from court cases include: species concerned, numbers, illegal method used, penalty imposed, laws/articles of the law and regulations of interest. However, in order to be

meaningful these data need to be combined with some information on enforcement effort and court efficiency as by themselves they might not give an accurate enough picture of IKB occurrences (they are the data presented under question A4 of the Scoreboard).

- b. Data from wildlife hospitals in a country, that receive victims of IKB. They can provide interesting data on the means of IKB, the numbers, seasonal occurrence, and potentially the trend.
- c. Data from NGO surveillance programmes, covert or not. BirdLife International presented [a Best Practice Guide for monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds](#) at the MIKT meeting in Cairo in 2016.
- d. Data from enforcement agency patrols and intelligence gathering. Including scale of enforcement efforts (e.g. number of enforcement officers, or trends in enforcement efforts), including an estimation of efficiency of effort
- e. Data from bird registries of captive breeding centres.
- f. Data from seizures with warrants, at markets or entry/exit points of the country.
- g. Data reported from the public to government agencies, NGOs, specialised hotlines, or databases, in eponymous or anonymous ways.
- h. Data submitted by governments as part of reporting on pressures and threats to birds species under Article 12 Report on the Birds Directive (EU countries only).

20. Data from the different sources mentioned above might be scattered or not easily available. Therefore, in the process of agreeing on a methodology and choosing which data sources to use it would be important to ensure that the data chosen are accessible or can be generated by new monitoring initiatives, and that different government authorities and stakeholders collaborate to exchange the data.

21. Consideration should also be given to indirect data sources such as sales of specific equipment, or rise in imports of such equipment, which can help indicate a source of problem or a changing trend.

Estimating full scale and magnitude of IKB across a country OR using indicators of scale that allow tracking of the trend

22. The RSP aims for a 50% reduction of IKB by 2030. Ideally a country would have systematic monitoring of IKB in place to quantify the scale of IKB across the whole country, using a monitoring sampling technique or existing data sources, that would allow for country level extrapolation. If however, this option is not available, another option would be to monitor IKB trend, using a set of reliable, and repeatable indicators, which correlate with IKB at the country level. A country would have to be satisfied that these indicators give a representative picture of the IKB situation and are accessible or can be generated by new monitoring initiatives, and are regularly available at national level. Using a set of such reliable and accessible indicators could allow comparison between years, and the possibility to infer from those whether any change in the scale and scope of IKB has occurred.

The second option, i.e. the one using indicators of IKB, could be a more realistic option for countries with limited amounts of data and capacity for monitoring on the ground. In all cases, baseline values would be obtained during the first year of the monitoring.

Whereas according to the RSP the baseline year is considered to be 2020, this however, has not happened yet for most countries. Furthermore, it is conceivable that a country did not have good data in 2020 but has better, more reliable data in subsequent years. There are two options regarding setting the baseline in such cases:

- a. The country could use 2021 or a later year as the baseline and measure the progress over nine years or less until 2030, using a robust methodology and better data.
- b. The country could make a pragmatic decision and assumption that IKB was at a similar level in 2021/22 as it would had been in 2020 and continue from there.

Delaying setting the baseline would be justified in cases where better data quality can be ensured. Comparing against a 2020 baseline with poor quality data and methodology will not produce helpful results. In that case it can be considered to use a later baseline date. For example, if the quality of the data on IKB status and scale reported in Scoreboard Indicator A1, is ranked 2 or less, then it is recommended that Parties establish a methodology, and use as a baseline the first year of this new methodology.'

23. In establishing a methodology, countries are recommended to consider the following elements:

- Establish a steering committee at national level, with the participation of relevant authorities, NGOs, hunters' associations, and other relevant stakeholders such as bird breeders, wildlife hospital managers, and others
- Consider the kinds of IKB that occur in the country, taking into account existing publications or consulting experts and stakeholders, in order to determine the most appropriate kind of data for monitoring the specific IKB problem
- Decide which authority would be responsible for the monitoring of IKB, including implementing the monitoring and reporting
- Assess the data available, the accessibility and collaboration of authorities for data provision and the opportunities to rapidly generate useful data through new monitoring initiatives
- Consider the financial resources and obligations
- Decide in a collaborative and transparent way on the most appropriate method and implementation strategy for monitoring IKB in the country
- Start the regular monitoring and establish a baseline. Ideally the baseline should be established in 2020 or 2021, to allow for comparison in later years, however, it is worth considering the quality of the data and method when deciding a baseline, which will be used in future years to compare progress against.
- Establish a baseline.
- Decide on a regular timeline for compiling the data and producing a report.
- Publish the data on a website, while respecting regulations for data protection, transparency, etc.
- Review methodology and kinds of IKB over time, to determine changing methods, patterns and needs, and adapt methods accordingly.

The above recommendations are proposed for reaching agreement and gaining wide support and ownership in a multistakeholder process, such as the one for tackling IKB. Each country would need to assess and decide which of these elements would best suit its needs.

All the above can be integrated in the country National Action Plan (NAP), if one is deemed as necessary and to form part of the monitoring chapter of the NAP, as appropriate, including the baseline and describing the chosen monitoring methodology.

Options for next steps in developing a methodology for assessing scale and scope of IKB (Baseline and methodology)

Firstly, a country would have to decide if it would attempt to estimate the full scale and magnitude of

IKB across the country or if it would prefer to use indicators of scale that allow tracking of the trend and therefore progress across time without extrapolating to the national scale. Additionally, when setting out to decide on a methodology a country would need to have an assessment of the kinds of IKB that occur in the country in order to be able to assess more realistically the most appropriate method and data.

The two main options are the following:

24. Option A: A country chooses to attempt to estimate the full scale and magnitude of IKB across the country. In that case, the possible alternative methods available would be:

Method 1: Review the available data in the country and decide on a methodology and baseline which uses data from different representative sources, as presented in paragraph 19 above, to estimate the full scale of IKB at a national level (Hybrid method-national scale)

If this method is chosen it would be important to conduct a thorough review of available data, including indirect data, on IKB in the country and decide on a method of extrapolating from the data sources used to the national level. Extrapolating to national level from these diverse data sources would require that there is also consideration of effort. For any of the data sources chosen it's important to be confident that they correlate clearly with IKB.

If this method is chosen, it is important to secure the cooperation of other authorities and stakeholders to ensure that they will cooperate in providing the data in a timely manner.

Method 2: Establish a regular survey method across an appropriate scale (Survey method-national scale)

Decide on the methodology for conducting the survey, estimate the human resource requirements and equipment needs for conducting the survey, bearing in mind remote methods like automatic sound monitoring devices, and the analysis. Design the sampling strategy for the survey and establish a method for extrapolating to national level from the sample surveyed.

Consider the collaborators, i.e. which agencies will be responsible, which stakeholders could collaborate or implement the survey, who will compile the data, who will analyse the data; agree on data sharing agreements, and on who will compile the report. Agree on the different roles and collaboration.

Method 3: Use BirdLife International's national estimates of scale of IKB from Brochet et al. (2016 and 2017) as a baseline and encourage follow up research. (NGO method-national scale)

The BirdLife International papers Brochet et al (2016 & 2017), are currently the only available complete, peer-reviewed overview of IKB in the Mediterranean and Europe, and as such they are referenced in the RSP, as relevant sources, particularly where more recent data are not available. The papers are the result of coordinated assessments organized by BirdLife International across different countries, with national quantitative estimates of the scale of IKB for different species being made through extrapolation from a variety of nationally available information sources, using a variety of methods, but following a set template and a single set of guidance. This kind of assessment is best suited as a periodic survey of scale of IKB, rather than an annual method. Therefore, the BirdLife International assessment method could be considered as a snapshot to assess progress every five or ten years. If this approach is chosen, it would be important to get in touch with NGO BirdLife International and encourage the NGO national

BirdLife partner, or other well-placed partner, to repeat the assessment published in Brochet 2016 & 2017 to update the situation with IKB in the country.

25. Option B: A country chooses to use indicators of scale that allow tracking of the trend and therefore progress over time without extrapolating to national scale, in that case the methods available would be:

Where a country chooses a method using indicators to assess IKB trend, it would be important to determine that the indicators chosen, correlate positively with scale of IKB in the country.

Method 1: Review the available data in each country and decide on a methodology and baseline which uses data from different sources, as presented in paragraph 19 above, as an indication of IKB scale across the country (Hybrid method-indicators for trend)

If this method is chosen it would be important to conduct a thorough review of available data, including indirect data, on IKB in the country and decide on which data sources will be used. For any of the data sources chosen it is important to be confident that they correlate clearly with IKB.

If this method is chosen, it is important to secure the cooperation of other authorities and stakeholders to ensure that they will cooperate in providing the data in a timely manner.

Method 2: Establish a regular survey method across an appropriate scale (Survey method-indicators for trend)

Decide on the methodology for conducting the survey, estimate the human resource requirements and equipment needs for conducting the survey, bearing in mind remote methods like automatic sound monitoring devices, and the analysis. Design the sampling strategy for the survey that will enable determining of trend.

Consider the collaborators, i.e. which agencies will be responsible, which stakeholders could collaborate or take over the survey, who will compile the data, who will analyse the data; agree on data sharing agreements, and on who will compile the report. Agree on the different roles and collaboration.

Methods 1 and 2 under Option B could be alternatives, or they can also be combined, for example the results from a survey on an appropriate scale (method 2) could be combined with other appropriate indicators under method 1.

26. *It is recognized that it is necessary to provide practical examples to illustrate the methods listed under Option A and Option B, but as that would make the paper too long and technical these practical examples will be provided in webinars and other online resources to illustrate each methodology.*

Assessment of the RSP objective

27. The different methods under Option A, would allow for the production of an estimate of the total number of illegally killed or taken birds at the national level for the countries which choose these methods, whereas those which use methods under Option B, would only be able to produce a trend. Methods under Option B might be easier for countries which have less available data and resources. If countries can choose Option A or Option B, it means that different

countries might be taking different approaches and tracking different data sources and therefore might not have directly comparable data. It also means that some countries will have total numbers of birds killed/taken to compare between years, and others just trends, which would make a quantitative analysis across the RSP range of countries difficult. It will be possible however, to achieve a joint qualitative evaluation based on the results presented by each country and to achieve a result in terms of reduction per country, which is the objective of the RSP.

Additionally, it is possible to use the two studies by Brochet et al (2016 & 2017) as guidance, and thereby arrive to a quantitative result, based on the trends reported by the countries reporting only trends. This would allow a comparison against the RSP Objective of 50% reduction. For example, if a country is reporting a 30% reduction of the trend, if no other data source is available, then using the numbers reported in the Brochet et al (2016 & 2017) papers it could be possible to arrive at a numerical estimate for magnitude of IKB in that country at a later point in time.

28. Relevant articles and papers:

- Methodology document to identify Black-Spots of Illegal Killing of Birds, Document prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the Bern Convention (T-PVS/Inf (2015) 3)
- [Brochet, et al. \(2016\) Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean, Bird Conservation International, 26:1–28.](#)
- [Brochet et al. \(2017\) Illegal killing and taking of birds in Europe outside the Mediterranean: assessing the scope and scale of a complex issue. Bird Conservation International, 29\(1\):10-40](#)
- [Scoreboard to Assess the Progress in Combating Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Wild Birds \(IKB\)](#) A self-assessment framework for national use (Annex 1 to Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP13), 17 July 2017:
- [Best Practice Guide for monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds](#)

29. Recommended action:

The CMS MIKT members are recommended to endorse this document;
The Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds is invited to support the submission of the document for its possible endorsement by the 41st Standing Committee.