



Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Standing Committee

Recommendation No. 197 (2017) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 8 December 2017, on biosafety measures for the prevention of the spread of amphibian and reptile species diseases

The Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the convention, which are to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats;

Recalling that Article 3 of the convention requires Parties to take the necessary steps to promote national policies for the conservation of wild flora, wild fauna and natural habitats, with particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species, especially endemic ones, and endangered habitats;

Recalling that under Article 11, paragraph 2.b of the Convention, each Contracting Party undertakes to strictly control the introduction of non-native species;

Recalling [Recommendation No. 99 \(2003\)](#) of the Standing Committee on the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (IAS);

Recalling [Recommendation No. 176 \(2015\)](#) of the Standing Committee on the prevention and control of the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* chytrid fungus;

Reminding that according to the [Global Amphibian Assessment \(GAA\)](#), 43% of amphibian species are declining in populations and 32% are threatened;

Taking into account the fact that an increasing number of studies documents that Ranavirus, chytrid infections and other emergent fungal disease such as the Snake Fungal Disease (SFD) are responsible for mass mortalities and local declines or even extirpations of amphibians' populations and some species of reptiles in the world and at the European level;

Aware of the fact that only infections such as *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* and Ranavirus are listed for amphibians among the [OIE-Listed diseases, infections and infestations in 2017](#) by the World Organisation for Animal Health;

Conscious that only the precautionary approach can support efforts to prevent the spread of the various diseases and that current mitigation methods have little, if any, effect on halting the spread of the diseases;

Noting that human activities play a role in the spread of viral, fungal and fungal-like diseases on amphibian and reptiles, in particular trade, movement (e.g., mitigation translocations) and research;

Acknowledging however, that conservation and research activities and projects remain indispensable and greatly contribute to improving the knowledge of reptiles and amphibians and their protection;

Recalling that the epidemiological impact of the trade is significant and may negatively affect conservation and trade economics;

Aware that there are bio-security risks associated with the translocation of native species within their natural range, even at a short distance and recalling Recommendation No. 158 (2012) of the Standing Committee on Conservation translocations under changing climatic conditions;

Recalling the CBD Technical Series No. 48 on [Pets, Aquarium, and Terrarium Species: Best Practices for Addressing Risks to Biodiversity](#), which notes that there are significant gaps in global regulations of infectious disease and suggests risk assessment and screening approaches to potentially invasive pathogens;

Further recalling the [Best Practices in Pre-Import Risk Screening for Species of Live Animals in International Trade](#), prepared by the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) focussing on “best practices” to address the risks associated with imports of live non-native animals and their parasites and pathogens in international trade;

Noting that it is extremely important that the spread of diseases is halted or at least slowed down and that the introduction of new emerging pathogens is prevented;

Recalling that a pro-active stance by national authorities and transnational cooperation are essential for the effective prevention and control of any wildlife disease,

Recommends that Contracting Parties:

1. Design and implement effective biosafety measures at national level as appropriate to prevent the further introduction and spread of known and emerging amphibian and reptile pathogens among populations within and across countries, including biosafety rules and protocols to field-work for researchers, visitors and naturalists, pet keepers and conservation practitioners where meaningful;
2. Consider establishing coherent and proactive regulatory systems for trade in amphibian and reptile species which encourage best practice sharing and collaboration among all actors involved, taking example, as far as relevant, of existing sanitary and veterinary frameworks for livestock, fish species and pets;
3. Consider ways to facilitate the exact identification of amphibian, reptile and fish species and their origin in trade, including for non-CITES listed species and in particular when it comes to customs requirements and regulations;
4. Consider ways to estimate volumes of amphibians and reptiles traded annually and the estimated value of global imports;
5. Using the most appropriate legal framework, and at the earliest opportunity implement immediate restrictions on the amphibian and reptile species trade when an emerging pathogen spread with significant impact on wild populations has been identified until necessary preventive and management measures are designed, based on evidence, throughout the entire commercial chain;
6. Act towards improving the awareness and education of persons keeping amphibian and reptile species as pets, on their responsibilities in terms of biosafety for the benefit of public health and nature conservation. An improved cooperation between national authorities, herpetological societies and researchers and pet trade associations for mitigating the conservation risks from pet trade is essential;
7. Support monitoring of wild populations and surveillance of emerging infectious diseases in wild populations and facilitate the uptake of best practices for doing so;
8. Support research on the conservation biology of amphibian and reptile species, in particular linked to the recent outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases;
9. Support research towards evaluating the efficacy of other disease mitigation measures in the wild, such as vaccination, habitat modification, etc. for preventing the spread of amphibian and reptile species diseases;
10. Keep the Standing Committee informed of the measures taken to implement this recommendation.