



Strasbourg, 7 November 2022

T-PVS(2022)26

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**FIRST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS FOR THE
PAN-EUROPEAN ACTION PLAN FOR STURGEONS**

Strasbourg, 5 - 6 October 2022

Agora building, Room G06

MEETING REPORT

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

The first meeting of the National Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons took place in-person from 5 to 6 October 2022 in Strasbourg.

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the first meeting of the National Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons;
- Remind all range Contracting Parties to appoint a National Focal Point with the necessary background, network and mandate to engage in the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons;
- Call on range Contracting Parties to step up their conservation efforts to tackle the threats revealed by the 2022 IUCN Red List assessment;
- Encourage range Contracting Parties to implement without delay the suggested actions and the suggested sequence of actions determined by National Focal Points.

1. Opening of the meeting

Ms Ursula Sticker, Secretary of the Bern Convention, welcomed the participants in the very first meeting of the National Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons. She informed that the meeting would aim to take stock of the state of implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons since its adoption by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in 2018, identify gaps and propose solutions, showcase good practices and agree on a timebound workplan.

She also thanked the Dutch authorities for their generous financial voluntary contribution to the coordination of the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda (T-PVS/Agenda(2022)22) was adopted without amendments and is reproduced in Appendix I.

3. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons

Ms Salome Nozadze (Georgia) was elected as Chair of the National Focal Points on the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.

4. The new IUCN Red list assessment – what changes for Europe?

Mr Arne Ludwig, Chair of the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group, presented the findings of the 2022 IUCN Red list assessment. He recalled the criteria considered for the assessment and stressed that carrying out these assessments every 10 years represented a significant amount of work.

In 1996, the first IUCN assessment read: “All sturgeon and paddlefish species are threatened or near threatened: 6 are Critically Endangered, 11 are Endangered, 8 Vulnerable, and 2 are Near Threatened.”

Since the second assessment carried out in 2010, the population trends considerably deteriorated:

- 1 species became extinct
- 1 species was extinct in the wild
- 17 species had been decreasing (6 in Europe; 9 in Asia & 2 in North America)
- 3 North American species were stable
- 2 species had been increasing (Adriatic sturgeon & Atlantic sturgeon in the US and Canada)
- 3 species from North America had unknown trends

As a result, the 2022 IUCN Red List assessment reads: “All surviving sturgeon species –also migratory, found across the northern hemisphere –are now at risk of extinction due to dams and poaching, pushing the world’s most Critically Endangered group of animals yet closer to the brink.”

(1 species Extinct, 1 species Extinct in the Wild, 17 species Critically Endangered, 3 Endangered and 5 Vulnerable)

5. Outcomes of the survey on the implementation of Recommendation No. 199 (2018) on the Pan-European Action Plan for the conservation of the sturgeon

Mr Ralf Reinartz, consultant to the Bern Convention, informed participants of the outcomes of a survey on the state of implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons since its adoption by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in 2018.

The questionnaire was structured along the following headings:

- Distribution
- Protection Measures
- Administration

- International Cooperation
- Funding
- Needs Assessment
- Conflicts

16 range Contracting Parties took part in the survey, representing all European marine basins where sturgeon existed.

The main findings of the survey could be wrapped up as follows:

Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former and current distributions were known and national databases on sightings were documented, locally additional research was needed.
Protection Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal protection of sturgeons (fishing ban, prohibition of possession, trade and transport) was considered as the basic protection measure with differing levels of enforcement. Some countries have dedicated national action plans for sturgeons or have included the conservation of sturgeons into other existing strategic frameworks. • Habitat restoration, river continuity, population support by sturgeon releases, focus on sturgeons within the EIAs were mentioned as part of additional protection measures. Several countries have designated protected areas for the conservation of sturgeons.
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporters pointed to the lack of communication/collaboration with and between authorities.
International Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International cooperation varied from the engagement of international experts to the exchange of information regarding shared sturgeon populations and the participation in regional and international agreements.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no long-term funding established in any of the case examples. Sturgeon conservation and restoration was competing with other important conservation priorities.
Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building for improving and harmonising coordination, cooperation and reporting skills but also in technical fields such as monitoring, <i>ex situ</i> measures, habitat protection/restoration was considered as a basic necessary task.
Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts resulted from competing and conflicting European strategies between sectors, the lack of dialogue between stakeholders and the resulting unsustainable use of rivers and seas.

6. Oral report on the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for the conservation of the sturgeon by the National Focal Points of the range countries which did not reply to the survey

National focal points updated participants on recent developments regarding the conservation of sturgeons.

7. Gaps identified through the survey

Mr Ralf Reinartz informed participants of the gaps in the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons identified through the survey.

He emphasised deficits in some countries in:

Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional information on former occurrences • Regional and international databases • Participation by stakeholders and the general public • Ability to distinguish between native wild individuals, individuals from release programmes and introduced exotic sturgeons and / or "escapees" from aquaculture
Protection Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement and harmonisation of legal protection • Coherent plans and frameworks for sturgeon conservation • Technical guidelines • Sustainable management and operational procedures in relevant activities (e.g. sediment extraction, aquaculture, fisheries, navigation, hydropower) • Awareness and involvement by and of the general public and stakeholders • Population support from <i>ex situ</i> operations • Consideration of genetic aspects in sturgeon releases • Pre-planned emergency procedures for saving animals / rare individuals
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of actors and entities within certain categories or sectors • Effective cooperation and communication between actors • Competition of other conservation priorities with sturgeon conservation and restoration • Clear definition and distribution of tasks
International Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International cooperation on shared sturgeon populations
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular / continuous funding
Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity and capacity building and working resources

Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on conflicts or upcoming conflicting infrastructure and activities between sectors • Unsustainable operating standards for certain types of activities • Information on negative effects of infrastructure and activities (e.g. bycatch, extent of poaching, need for targeted EIAs). • Knowledge and experience on mitigating conflicts • Non-cooperative attitude of stakeholders and other sectors of water use
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8. Good practices identified through the survey

Mr Ralf Reinartz also informed participants of good practices in the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons identified through the survey.

In particular the following practices mentioned by single countries could set an example:

Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on former distribution and sturgeon waters was complete • Databases on sightings (and catches) existed • Participation of stakeholders and citizens was ensured • Individual sturgeons encountered in the wild could be assigned / recognised and / or identified
Protection Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were sufficient plans or strategies to follow • Legal protection was in place, enforced and harmonised over the range of populations • Emergency procedures were in place (catches, facilities) • Individual sturgeons encountered in the wild could be assigned / recognised and / or identified • Protected areas based on the life-cycle of populations had been established • Technical guidelines for implementation were available (e.g. monitoring, fish passes, <i>ex situ</i>) • Genetic aspects of sturgeon populations were considered and sufficient population support for <i>ex situ</i> was provided • Research programmes closed knowledge gaps
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive cooperation of actors and entities from all levels, fields and sectors in and towards sturgeon conservation and restoration existed • Responsibilities, priorities and measures for sturgeon conservation were assigned, harmonised and coordinated with other conservation priorities • Sustainable management and operational procedures were in place (e.g. sediment extraction, aquaculture, fisheries, navigation) • Participation of stakeholders and citizens was ensured
International Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries within the same region cooperated effectively on clearly defined goals • Sufficient international frameworks and organisations existed • Countries cooperated effectively on the international level on common tasks for sturgeon conservation and restoration
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding was available and dedicated specifically to sturgeons • Funding for necessary long-term measures was available

Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and specific capacities were available • Wherever and whenever capacities were not available, they were built or acquired
Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on conflicts was available • Knowledge and experience for mitigating and solving conflicts existed • Conflicts were anticipated and mitigated or solved with the involvement of stakeholders • Procedures for conducting environmental impact studies with regard to sturgeon conservation and restoration were in place • Cooperation between stakeholders and different sectors of water use existed

9. Strengthening the role of International River and Regional Sea Conventions – fostering partnerships

9.a. Helcom Baltic Sea sturgeon Action Plan and its implementation

Mr Jörn Gessner, Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, informed participants of the objectives of the Baltic Sea Sturgeon Action Plan of the Convention on the Protection of the Baltic Sea Area, Helsinki Convention (HELCOM).

The Action Plan aimed to tackle the reasons for decline of and threats to sturgeons in the Baltic Sea and reaffirmed the commitment of HELCOM Contracting Parties to reinstate the Baltic sturgeon by 2029.

The Action Plan consisted in 7 objectives and 16 actions:

- Objective 1: Actively support the recovery of the target populations to initiate a positive population trend
- Objective 2: Protect populations under recovery from accidental and directed removal of individuals
- Objective 3: Protect and restore the sturgeon habitats where necessary
- Objective 4: Secure or facilitate sturgeon migration in target rivers
- Objective 5: Increase public, administrative and political awareness on sturgeon conservation
- Objective 6: Set proper financial and legal prerequisites for sturgeon restoration
- Objective 7: Monitor and evaluate Action Plan implementation to allow adaptive management

9.b. Transboundary cooperation in the Danube: Sturgeon Strategy of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

Ms Birgit Vogel, Executive Secretary of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) informed participants of the sturgeon strategy of the ICPDR.

The ICPDR constituted an overall legal instrument for co-operation in the Danube River Basin. The ICPDR Sturgeon Strategy was approved in December 2017 outlining the key competences and mandate of the ICPDR in sturgeon conservation and a strong need for concerted action with other partners. It foresaw the restoration of lost and altered habitats, the prevention of further habitat degradation, the facilitation of fish migration and the improvement of water quality.

Sturgeons were also prominently highlighted in the Danube River Basin Management Plan updated in 2021 which foresaw:

- *Ex situ* broodstocks, reproduction and release programmes
- Effectively enforced fishing bans
- Habitats, migration corridors, and controls on infrastructure developments
- Monitoring of by-catch

- Monitoring of populations
- Creation of migratory fish database

As well as the continuation of specific projects and the strengthening of the cooperation with the Black Sea Basin.

10. EU Policies Related to Sturgeon Conservation: Recent Developments

Mr András Bartal, Directorate General for Environment – European Commission, informed participants of the EU policies contributing to the protection and conservation of sturgeons.

➤ EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives

By 2030 EU member States should establish a larger and coherent EU-wide network of protected areas and develop an EU Nature Restoration Plan.

The strategy targeted the protection of at least 30% of EU land area and 30% of EU sea area as well as the definition of conservation objectives and the effective management and appropriate monitoring of all protected areas.

Another target of the strategy was the restoration of at least 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers by 2030.

Sturgeons would benefit both from the achievement of the protected area target as well as of the habitat and species restoration target.

➤ Proposal for a Nature Restoration Law

In June 2022 the European Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on nature restoration.

It foresaw that by 2030, restoration measures would cover 20% of EU's land and sea and that by 2050, measures would be in place for all ecosystems in need of restoration.

The restoration measures entailed the improvement of degraded areas, the re-establishment of lost areas and the improvement, re-establishment and reconnection of the habitats of species. The restoration measures supposed also to identify and remove barriers that prevent the connectivity of surface waters in order to contribute to the objective of restoring at least 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers in the EU by 2030

The restoration measures would benefit to sturgeons considering that they cover the habitats of all European sturgeon species and aimed to the removal of barriers to achieve the restoration of the natural connectivity of rivers.

➤ Proposal for a revised Environmental Crime Directive

The aim of the current Environmental Crime Directive was to protect the environment through criminal law, by providing for appropriate sanctioning and the harmonisation of environmental offences.

In 2020, the European Commission evaluated the Directive and found that it did not have much effect on the ground. In December 2021, the European Commission adopted the proposal for a revised Environmental Crime Directive. In addition to expanding the list of offences and the insertion of dynamic references to sectoral legislation in the articles, the proposal set out detailed minimum requirements for sanctions against natural and legal persons, along with several new implementing provisions.

Sturgeons came under the protection of the Environmental Crime Directive and would also be covered by the new proposal whenever any one of the wildlife offences would be committed.

Mr Bartal further informed participants of a planned contract supporting sturgeon conservation actions.

In July 2022 the European Commission launched a tender to support conservation actions to implement the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons (PANEUAP)

The contract had a budget of EUR 600,000, a duration of 24 months and comprised the following six tasks:

- Compiling information on the implementation of the PANEUAP in key range countries

- Guiding the protection and restoration of sturgeon habitats by assisting existing knowledge about sturgeon habitats and migration obstacles and developing guidelines on sturgeon habitat monitoring
- Supporting efforts to protect sturgeons from by-catch
- Developing a standard population monitoring methodology
- Developing best-practice technical guidelines on ex situ breeding and release programmes
- Increasing support from stakeholders for sturgeon conservation measures by organising intersectoral meetings and preparing communication materials

Finally, Mr Bartal informed of an on-going feasibility study on making the Iron Gates dams passable for Danube sturgeon (WePass2). The project built on the results of the project WePass, an initiative aimed at facilitating fish migration in the Danube basin, in particular at the Iron Gates. It started in April 2021, ran for three years and had a budget of EUR 2 million. The main objective of WePass2 was to carry out a feasibility study analysing the options to establish fish migration at the Iron Gates that would include a concept of the preliminary design of the fish passes and a cost estimate for their construction. The project was progressing according to plan with a final report due in early 2024.

11. LIFE projects for the conservation of Sturgeons

11.a Boat to rescue four Danube sturgeon species from extinction (LIFE-Boat 4 Sturgeon)

Mr Jakob Neuburg, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, informed participants of the objectives of the LIFE-Boat 4 Sturgeon project.

The project was implemented in 8 countries from 2022 to 2029 and had the following 8 objectives:

- Establish genetically diverse captive broodstocks of mature animals and necessary infrastructure in at least two locations (Austria and Hungary) which are maintained over the long-term.
- Artificially reproduce broodstock and rear offspring in specialised infrastructure by implementing the state-of-the-art methodologies regarding imprinting and fitness for survival which were developed and successfully proofed in “LIFE Sterlet”.
- Release genetically sound and diverse fit juveniles of all four species in Austria, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania to strengthen current populations of the brink of extinction by at least 2 000 adults each.
- Provide a long-term database and manual for *ex situ* actions and monitoring in sturgeon conservation for the whole Danube Region and other European catchments.
- Implement standardised monitoring of population development in Austria, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania.
- Coordinate with fishing authorities and communities along the Lower Danube and Black Sea to reduce Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine.
- Raise awareness of broad public and relevant stakeholders for the imminent danger of extinction of the sturgeons and the need of healthy river ecosystems for viable migratory fish populations such as sturgeons.
- Guarantee long-term sustainability of project actions and provide access for stakeholders to genetically proven Danubian sturgeon broodstock and juveniles for conservation issues in the Danube River Basin.

11.b. Sustainable protection of lower Danube sturgeons by preventing and counteracting poaching and illegal wildlife trade (LIFE for Danube Sturgeons)

Ms Jutta Jahrl, WWF Austria, informed participants of the objectives and successes of the LIFE project for the

sustainable protection of lower Danube sturgeons by preventing and counteracting poaching and illegal wildlife trade, implemented in 4 countries (Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine) between 2016 and 2020 along the Danube and the Black Sea coast.

The objectives of the project were the following:

- The market of legal and illegal sturgeon products is better known and under stronger surveillance of authorities; retailers are aware of legislation and enabled to prevent illegal products from reaching the market.
- Law enforcement is implemented more effectively through enhanced capacity and practical knowledge of authorities; higher acceptance and compliance by stakeholders lead to a long-term reduction of illegal sturgeon fishing and trade.
- Targeted fishing communities positively take on ownership for sturgeon conservation and are willing and are able to use alternative income sources to compensate profits from sturgeon fishing and to give stocks a break to recover.

These objectives were achieved, and the project resulted in extensions of sturgeon catch bans in the entire Lower Danube Region and additionally in stricter fishing regulations in the Ukrainian Danube Delta. A regional market survey provided first-time evidence of the scale of poaching and illegal trade, with 19% of samples originating from wild-caught sturgeons. The project also contributed to increasing the capacities and collaboration of law enforcement agencies. Moreover, it built cooperation with fishing communities and motivated fishermen to release sturgeon bycatch, explored alternative sources of income to the fishing of sturgeons and involved fishermen in the monitoring of sturgeons. More information: danube-sturgeons.org

12. The French National Action Plan for Sturgeons (2020 – 2029)

Mr Eric Rochard, INRAe, informed participants of the French experience for the preparation of a national action plan for sturgeons and presented its objectives.

Mr Rochard emphasised that the prerequisites for elaborating an action plan were the involvement of all layers of stakeholders (NGOs, scientific community, local authorities) and the existence of a political will.

He further stressed that the French National Action Plan for Sturgeons built on the results and addressed the gaps in the implementation of two LIFE projects.

The French National Action Plan for Sturgeons was articulated around four priority areas of work:

- In-situ conservation
- Protection and restoration of essential sturgeon habitats
- *Ex situ* conservation and re-introduction of sturgeons
- Research and international cooperation

Mr Rochard ended his presentation by stressing the challenges related to the funding of the action plan. It was not funded of its entire lifespan and the *ex situ* conservation activities were the more demanding in resources.

13. Possible next steps and identification of priority areas requiring specific attention

13.a. Break-out groups

Participants broke up into 2 smaller working groups to reflect on the gaps applicable to their own national context, region or sturgeon populations, identify best practices which could help tackle the gaps and agree on a timeline for coming up with solutions for addressing the gaps.

13.b Feedback from the break-out groups

The rapporteurs of both break-out groups reported in plenary on the outcomes of the discussions within the break-out groups.

Deficits identified	Solutions proposed by Group A	Solutions proposed by Group B
Communication	Increase communication and collaboration with and within administration/stakeholders and institutional setup Raise awareness about the status of sturgeons	
Funding	Encourage administrations and national authorities to place sturgeons higher in national priority list to ensure longer term funding	
Role of the Bern Convention	Act as umbrella for established regional activities, facilitate exchange between them and communicate the outcomes to EU and national ministries	
Capacity of people		Build capacities and define responsibilities
Technical support - dam/infrastructure/habitat restoration issues		Develop technical guidelines for mitigating damages (operation of dams, gravel extraction...) Develop technical guidelines for monitoring/restoring sturgeon habitats
Administration – national level		Encourage regular cooperation between actors Define clear objectives and distribution of tasks (elaborate national action plans)
International cooperation		Foster cooperation and seek for synergies between existing frameworks Showcase methodological approaches and best practices Exchange information (twinning projects)

13.c. Recommendations and next steps

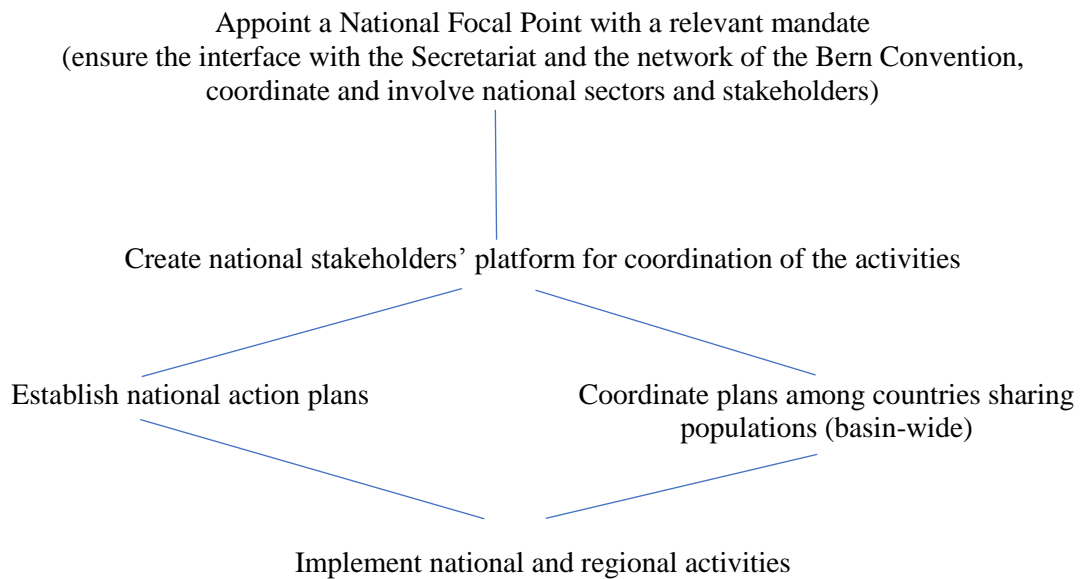
Ms Beate Striebel and Mr Jörn Gessner, the general rapporteurs of the meeting, wrapped up the outcome of the break-out groups and proposed to participants follow-up actions.

Acknowledging that the lack of communication/collaboration with authorities, stakeholders and actors (nationally and internationally), the lack of awareness of the status of sturgeons (Administration), the lack of capacity and the lack of long-term funding constitute deficits shared by most of range Contracting Parties, the general rapporteurs suggested to:

Communication	<p>Increase communication and collaboration with and within administration/stakeholders and institutional setup (best practice examples in France and Georgia)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise regular meetings of a national platform of actors • Implement long-term activities to facilitate trust building • Involve all relevant actors (stakeholders from nature conservation, water resources, fisheries, navigation) • Reach out why sturgeon conservation is necessary and important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Address the lack of awareness ○ Communicate for example via NGOs
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare guidelines for <i>ex situ</i> (including breeding and restoration programmes), monitoring, restoration, migration facilitation, and hydropower operation • Organise training through expert exchanges (twinning) • Capitalise on the capacities of scientific institutions and NGOs
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National ministries have to prioritise sturgeon conservation in national plans to ensure access to national and international funding sources
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a national strategy following the example of the PANEUAP including milestones and a timeline is in place
Role of National Focal Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Focal Points must engage in the international exchange and receive the necessary support for coordinating the national implementation of the PANEUAP under the Bern Convention
Role of the Bern Convention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as umbrella for established regional activities • Facilitate exchange between them • Communicate outcomes to the EU and national ministries

The general rapporteurs further presented the following sequence of actions:

Suggested sequence of actions



In parallel: Coordination of the PANEUAP by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention, facilitate exchange and cooperation (Network of National Focal Points)

Participants welcomed the suggested actions and suggested sequence of actions and agreed to request the support of the 42nd Standing Committee to reach them out to all range Contracting Parties.

14. Date and place of the next meeting

Pending the availability of resources, participants agreed to meet in-person in two years' time and to meet online in 2023.

The Secretariat invited range Contracting Parties wishing to host the meeting of the National Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons to inform the Secretariat.

15. Any other business

Participants discussed how to maintain the momentum of the meeting and continue exchanging until the second meeting of the National Focal Points on the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons. Participants agreed to exchange information by e-mail.

16. Conclusions of the meeting

The meeting results were briefly summarised. The Chair thanked the National Focal Points and the speakers. The meeting was closed.

Appendix I – Agenda		Documents	Expected results
Wednesday 5 October			
9.30	17. Opening of the meeting	List of National Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons T-PVS/Inf(2022) Recommendation No. 199 (2018) of the Standing Committee on the Pan-European Action Plan for the conservation of the sturgeon T-PVS(2018)09	
	18. Adoption of the agenda	Meeting agenda T-PVS/Agenda(2022)22 bis For adoption	National Focal Points are informed of the aims of the meeting and adopt the agenda.
	19. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons	 For decision	
	20. The new IUCN Red list assessment – what changes for Europe? <i>Presentation by Mr Arne Ludwig (Chair of the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group)</i> National Focal Points are informed of the results of the IUCN Red list assessment.	IUCN Red list assessment For information	National Focal Points take note of the results of the IUCN Red list assessment.

<p>21. Outcomes of the survey on the implementation of Recommendation No. 199 (2018) on the Pan-European Action Plan for the conservation of the sturgeon</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mr Ralf Reinartz (consultant)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the outcomes of the survey carried out among range Contracting Parties on the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons and exchange views on possible follow up work.</p>	<p>Link to the online survey https://forms.gle/wEi5Q6KMj667Ws_dE9</p> <p>Outcomes of the survey T-PVS/Inf(2022)49</p> <p>For information</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the outcomes of the survey and agree on a way forward for building on the findings.</p>
<p>22. Oral report on the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for the conservation of the sturgeon by the National Focal Points of the range countries which did not reply to the survey</p> <p>National Focal Points report orally (5 minutes maximum) on the actions undertaken to implement the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons since its adoptions by the Standing Committee in 2018.</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the state of implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons in range Contracting Parties.</p>
<p>23. Gaps identified through the survey</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mr Ralf Reinartz (consultant)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the gaps in and obstacles to the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons reported by range Contracting Parties and exchange views on how fill them in and overcome them.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>National Focal Points agree on ways for addressing gaps in or overcoming obstacles to the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.</p>

	<p>24. Good practices identified through the survey</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mr Ralf Reinartz (consultant)</i></p> <p>Good practices reported by range Contracting Parties are showcased and National Focal Points exchange views on whether they could be replicated in other contexts.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>National Focal Points consider the good practices showcased as a source of inspiration for stepping up the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons in their own national context.</p>
	<p>25. Strengthening the role of International River and Regional Sea Conventions – fostering partnerships</p>		
	<p>9.a. Helcom Baltic Sea sturgeon Action Plan and its implementation</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mr Jörn Gessner, (Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the state of implementation of the Helcom Action Plan and exchange views on the extent to which lessons can be learned/drawn for the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the implementation of the Helcom Baltic Sea Sturgeon Action Plan and discuss how it could inspire new partnerships and regional initiatives.</p>
	<p>9.b. Transboundary cooperation in the Danube: Sturgeon Strategy of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)</p> <p><i>Presentation by Ms Birgit Vogel (ICPDR)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the Sturgeon Strategy of the ICPDR and exchange views on the extent to which lessons can be learned/drawn for the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the Sturgeon Strategy of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and discuss how it could inspire new partnerships and regional initiatives.</p>

	<p>26. EU Policies Related to Sturgeon Conservation: Recent Developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives ✓ Proposal for a Nature Restoration Law ✓ Proposal for a revised Environmental Crime Directive ✓ Planned contract on supporting sturgeon conservation actions ✓ Feasibility study on making the Iron Gates dams passable for Danube sturgeon (WePass2) <p><i>Presentation by Mr Andras Bartal (DG ENVIRONMENT)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the EU policies contributing to the protection and conservation of sturgeons and of the call for project proposals launched by DG ENV.</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the existing EU policies contributing to the protection and conservation of sturgeons and of the call for project proposals.</p>
	<p>27. LIFE projects for the conservation of Sturgeons</p>		
	<p>11.a. Boat to rescue four Danube sturgeon species from extinction (LIFE-Boat 4 Sturgeon)</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mr Jakob Neuburg (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the implementation of the LIFE-Boat 4 Sturgeon project and exchange views on the extent to which lessons can be learned/drawn for the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the objectives, expected results and methodology of the LIFE project “Boat to rescue four Danube sturgeon species from extinction” and discuss the extent to which they could contribute to / benefit from it.</p>
	<p>11.b. Sustainable protection of lower Danube sturgeons by preventing and counteracting poaching</p>		<p>National Focal Points take note of the objectives, expected results and methodology of the LIFE project</p>

	<p>and illegal wildlife trade (LIFE for Danube Sturgeons)</p> <p><i>Presentation by Ms Jutta Jahrl (WWF Austria)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the implementation of the LIFE for Danube Sturgeons project and exchange views on the extent to which lessons can be learned/drawn for the implementation of the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>“Sustainable protection of lower Danube sturgeons by preventing and counteracting poaching and illegal wildlife trade” and discuss the extent to which they could contribute to / benefit from it.</p>
	<p>28. The French National Action Plan for Sturgeons (2020 – 2029)</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mr Eric Rochard (INRAe)</i></p> <p>National Focal Points are informed of the implementation of the French National Action Plan for Sturgeons and exchange views on the extent to which it can inspire the elaboration of national action plans in other Contracting Parties.</p>	<p>For information and discussion</p>	<p>National Focal Points take note of the objectives, expected results and methodology of the French National Action Plan for Sturgeons (2020 – 2029) and discuss how it could inspire their own management practices.</p>
	<p>29. Possible next steps and identification of priority areas requiring specific attention</p>		
	<p>13.a. Break-out groups</p> <p>National Focal Points discuss in parallel working groups how to address the challenges faced by Contracting Parties with the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons and possible solutions to overcome them are proposed.</p>	<p>For discussion</p>	<p>Challenges refraining the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons and possible solutions at local, national and regional level are identified.</p>
	<p>13.b Feedback from the break-out groups</p> <p>Rapporteurs from the break-out groups report in the plenary on the outcomes of discussion.</p>		<p>National Focal Points take note of the conclusions of the parallel working groups and discuss the extent to which the Bern Convention could foster and support</p>

		For discussion and decision	the implementation local, national and regional solutions identified.
	<p>13.c. Recommendations and next steps</p> <p>The general rapporteur wraps up the results of the discussions. National Focal Points exchange views on possible follow up work.</p>	For discussion and decision	National Focal Points agree on and are committed to a timebound roadmap for the implementation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons.
	<p>30. Date and place of the next meeting</p> <p><i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i></p> <p>Contracting Parties wishing to host the next meeting of the National Focal Points for the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons are invited to inform the Secretariat.</p>	For decision	The provisional venue and date of the next meeting are agreed on.
	31. Any other business		
	32. Conclusions of the meeting		
17.00	Thursday 6 October End of the meeting		

Appendix II – List of participants

CONTRACTING PARTIES

Member States	Representative
Estonia	Mr Meelis TAMBETS Head of NGO Wildlife Estonia Leading project manager of Estonian sturgeon restoration project
Georgia	Ms Salome NOZADZE Biodiversity Specialist Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture
Hungary	Dr. Gábor GUTI Fishery Management Research Group Agricultural and Food Research Centre Széchenyi István University
Italy	Ms Giovanna Marino Research Director of Sustainable Aquaculture Unit ISPRA - Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research
Poland	Ms Katarzyna Kamińska Główny specjalista w Wydziale Polityki Strukturalnej i Środowiska Morskiego Departament Rybołówstwa
Romania	Dr Dragos MICU Ministry of Environment
Slovak Republic	Mr Juraj HAJDU Mgr., PhD. - Hydrobiológ State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak republic
Slovenia	Tanja Košar Starič Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation
Sweden	Ms Susanne Viker Aquatic Biodiversity and Protected Areas <i>apologized</i>

OBSERVERS

Observers	Representative
European Habitats Forum EHF/IUCN	Ms Milica MISKOVIC Species Conservation Officer IUCN (Regional office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia) Serbia

SPEAKERS

Mr Andras BARTAL	European Commission
Mr Jörn GESSNER	Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries
Ms Jutta JAHRL	WWF Austria

Mr Jakob NEUBURG	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria Institute for Hydrobiology and Aquatic Ecosystem Management
Mr Ralf REINARTZ	Consultant
Mr Eric ROCHARD	Senior Research scientist INRAE Aquatic Ecosystems and Global Changes research unit
Ms Beate STRIEBEL-GREITER	WWF Sturgeon Initiative Leader WWF Central and Eastern Europe
Ms Birgit VOGEL	International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)
Mr Arne LUDWIG	Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW Berlin)

SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Directorate General of Democracy (DGII), Directorate of Democratic Participation Bern Convention	
Ms Ursula STICKER	Secretary of the Bern Convention
Mr Marc HORY	Project Manager