



# **Welcome to the „Pan European Sturgeon Action Plan“ Side Event**

**Bern Convention  
39th Standing Committee Meeting**

**Strasbourg**

**3.12.19**

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# Alarming Status

POPULATION TREND



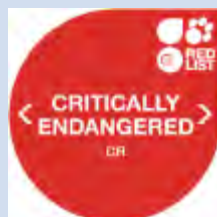
Decreasing



**Russian Sturgeon Complex**



**Adriatic Sturgeon**



**Ship Sturgeon**



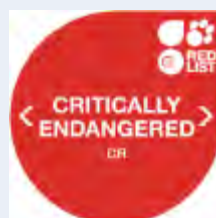
**Baltic Sturgeon**



**Sterlet**



**Stellate Sturgeon**



**European/Common Sturgeon**



**Beluga**



# Pan European Action Plan for Sturgeons

Recommendation No. 199 (2018) of the Standing Committee,  
adopted on 30 November 2018 on the Pan-European Action  
Plan for the conservation of the sturgeon



T-PVS/Inf(2018)6

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## Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons

Multi Species Action Plan for the:

Russian sturgeon complex (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*, *A. persicus-caspicus*),  
Adriatic sturgeon (*Acipenser naccarii*),  
Ship sturgeon (*Acipenser nudipectus*),  
Atlantic Baltic sturgeon, (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*),  
Sterlet (*Acipenser ruthenus*),  
Stellate sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*),  
European/Common sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*),  
and  
Beluga (*Huso huso*).

Geographical Scope: European Union and neighbouring countries with shared basins such as the Black Sea, Mediterranean, North Eastern Atlantic Ocean, North Sea and Baltic Sea

Intended Lifespan of Plan: 2019 – 2029



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**But a plan is just a plan.....**

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# Objectives of the Plan

## (1) Stop the decline of existing populations

- Directed fishing prohibited and enforcement against poaching effective
- Bycatch assessed and eliminated

### Current situation:

- Targeted sturgeon fishing is forbidden in all European countries
- Existing fishing bans in Romania and Bulgaria will expire soon and require prolongation.
- IUU fishing and by-catch is ongoing in rivers and seas !



# Objectives of the Plan

## (2) Actively support populations through *ex situ* living gene banks

- *Ex situ* stocks established to secure genetic diversity of all sturgeon populations
- Reproduction and release programmes implemented
- Regional (basin wide) coherence is ensured

### Current situation:

- Good examples for *ex situ* programmes exist for *A.sturio* (France) and *A.oxyrinchus* (Germany)
- Feasibility Study for Upper Danube ongoing
- „Projects“ underway in Austria, Germany, Italy, ....





# Objectives of the Plan



## **(3) Sturgeon habitats protected and restored**

- Existing habitats identified and protected
- Habitat restoration options identified & pilots implemented

## **(4) Sturgeon migration secured or facilitated**

- No further migration obstacles build in key rivers
- Existing obstacles identified and feasibility for passage solutions verified and prioritized





## **Current situation:**

- Danube: MEASURES project collects all available data on habitats for migrating fish
- Germany: Elbe River fish passage for sturgeons established
- Feasibility study for passage at Iron Gate ongoing: [We-Pass](#)

# Objectives of the Plan

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- (5) Ensure monitoring of sturgeon populations**
    - For EU MS also an obligation under Art 17 of the HD

## Current situation:

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- 
- The only sound population monitoring program is in place in France
  - Lack of funding for directed monitoring in most other European countries
  - Lack of consistency and cooperation between range countries



# Objectives of the Plan

## (6) Eliminate illegal trade of all sturgeon products

### Current situation:

- Combating illegal caviar trade is not a priority for the national agencies
- Attempts to improve the labelling process under CITES were unsuccessful in 2018
- A market survey is part of a LIFE project in the Lower Danube Region <http://danube-sturgeon.org>
- Study on forensic methods to identify sturgeon in trade is planned for 2020 under the CITES Animals Committee



# Objectives of the Plan



(7) **Secure adequate funding and regulations** to enable implementation of AP

## Current Situation

- DG ENV has compiled information on EU funding instruments for sturgeon conservation measures
- National Priorities for the next EU funding phase must reflect sturgeon conservation measures (e.g. PAF)
- National funding sources needed for national obligations (i.e. Art 17 Reporting)



# Objectives of the Plan

## (8) Secure support from actors and stakeholders

- Raise awareness
- Strengthen the inter-agency and inter-sectoral exchange



### Current situation:

- Various awareness raising measures implemented mostly as project based activities
- Diversity of stakeholders (fisheries, river and marine administrations, navigation, energy, enforcement authorities, science, CSOs) makes involvement of governmental actors essential





# Example for range-wide collaboration and involvement: Galati conference Oct 2019

- Discussion of implementation strategies among representatives and stakeholders from all Danube Basin and all Black Sea countries
- 120 participants from fisheries, water and environmental administrations, the scientific community and civil society
- Resulting in joint Galati Declaration (see flyer)



<http://sturgeon.ugal.ro>

# Objectives of the Plan

## (9) **Monitor** and evaluate AP **implementation**

→ International coordination and cooperation is a key factor of success



### **Current Situation:**

Mandates for the Secretariat of the Bern Convention to:

- 1. Closely **monitor** the implementation of the Action Plan with all competent MEAs, actors and institutions, if possible through a dedicated working group;
- 2. **Coordinate** regular **reporting** on the progress of the Action Plan at national level, to support the implementation of recommended actions and of adaptive management;

# Focal points

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## Result 9.1 Responsibilities for AP implementation clarified and regular monitoring and evaluation conducted

Action 9.1.1 States; river basin and sea commissions and EC authorities **nominate a focal point/coordinator** responsible for monitoring the implementation of the AP

- **National stocktaking and coordination** shall be the responsibility of a national focal point in the respective state. The national focal point is responsible for collecting information on the progress of implementation of the Action Plan and transfer to the Bern Convention
- So far **Austria, Georgia, Italy, Poland, Serbia and the European Commission** have nominated such a focal point.
- **All other signatory countries are invited to do so.**



# Questions or comments?

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- **Examples**

Numerous research and pilot activities in many countries have prepared the ground for stepping up effective common action.

## Examples of sturgeon recovery measures in Europe

### GERMANY

#### European Sturgeon

Reintroduction ongoing in River Elbe based upon National Action Plan and for **Baltic Sturgeon** in Oder River

### NETHERLANDS

#### European Sturgeon

Reintroduction planned, National Action Plan in preparation, habitat restoration in the delta ongoing

### FRANCE

#### European Sturgeon

National Action Plan in place; Recovery ongoing in the Gironde and tributaries; *Ex situ* programme established; Monitoring in place

### ITALY

#### Adriatic Sturgeon

National Action Plan in place; Recovery ongoing, but uncoordinated; Reintroduction of **Beluga** planned

### BALTIC SEA



#### Baltic Sturgeon

Regional Action Plan adopted in 2019 focusing on joint habitat, bycatch, *ex situ* and release measures

### AUSTRIA

#### Sterlet

National Action Plan planned; Stocking and monitoring ongoing

### RUSSIA

#### Russian Sturgeon, Stellate, Beluga, Sterlet, Ship Sturgeon

Stocking ongoing in the tributaries to the Sea of Azov and in Volga River

### GEORGIA

#### Russian Sturgeon, Stellate, Beluga

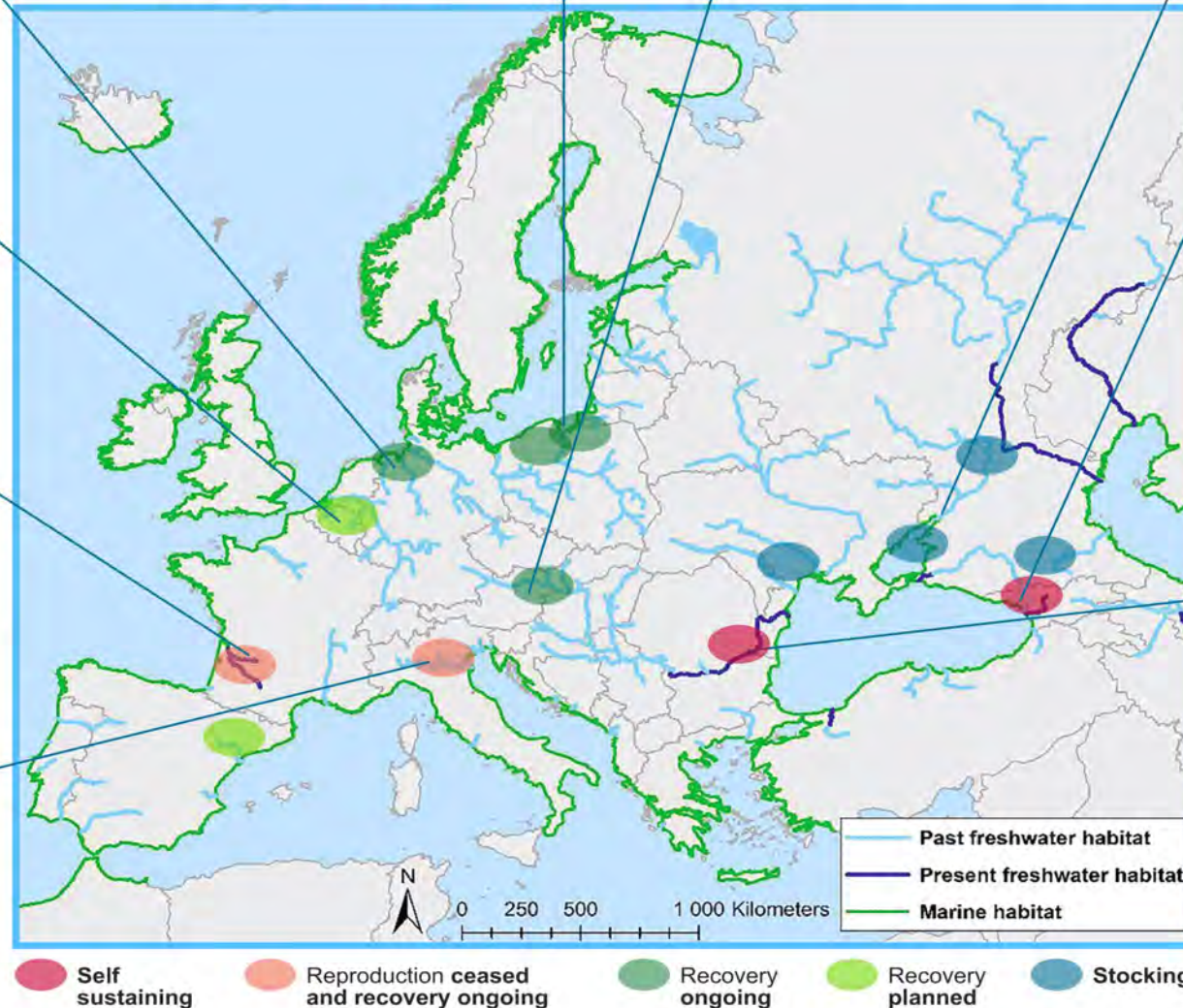
Monitoring ongoing and creation of a protected area in Rioni River

*Only the Lower Danube and the Rioni River in Georgia still host self-sustaining populations today.*

### LOWER DANUBE

#### Russian Sturgeon, Stellate, Beluga, Sterlet

Danube-wide Action Plan in place; Habitat identification ongoing; Monitoring and stocking uncoordinated; Project against illegal fishing and trade; Feasibility study for fish passage at Iron Gate; *Ex situ* planned





Examples from selected  
countries

*Ex situ* - Upper Danube

General approach - France

Regional approach - Helcom





# Feasibility study on the construction of an *ex situ* facility for Danube sturgeon species in the Upper Danube River Basin

Facility for:

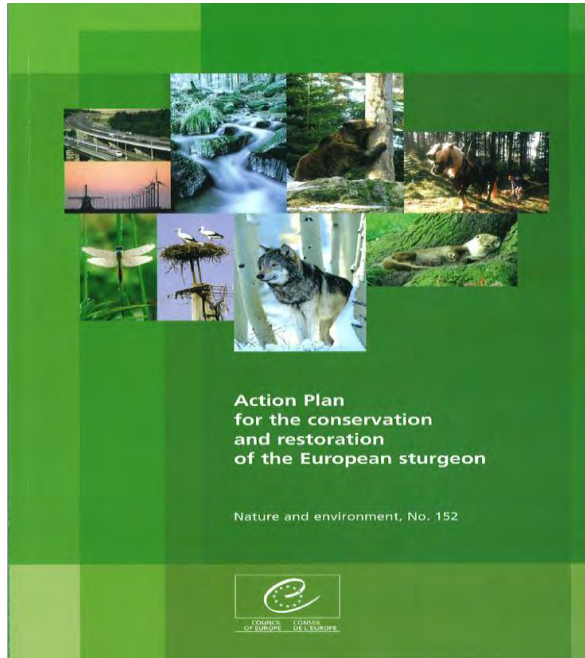
- Safeguarding & broodstock holding for Danube sturgeon species
- Reproduction & rearing for release
- Research in the fields of rearing technology & ecology
- Public relations activities

Supported by:





# French National Action Plan



© S. Roques (Irstea)

European action plan (Rosenthal et al., 2007)

# The first phase of the French Action Plan (2011-2015)

- French implementation of the European Action Plan
- Governance, committees
- Synthesis of knowledge
- Identification of main threats
- Long-term strategy
  - Axis 1 In situ conservation of the population
  - Axis 2 Protection of habitats and connectivity
  - Axis 3 Ex situ conservation
  - Axis 4 Research to support the conservation through international cooperation





# *Ex situ* stock development



# Releases

1.6M juveniles between 1996 and 2016





# Fisheries oriented campaigns

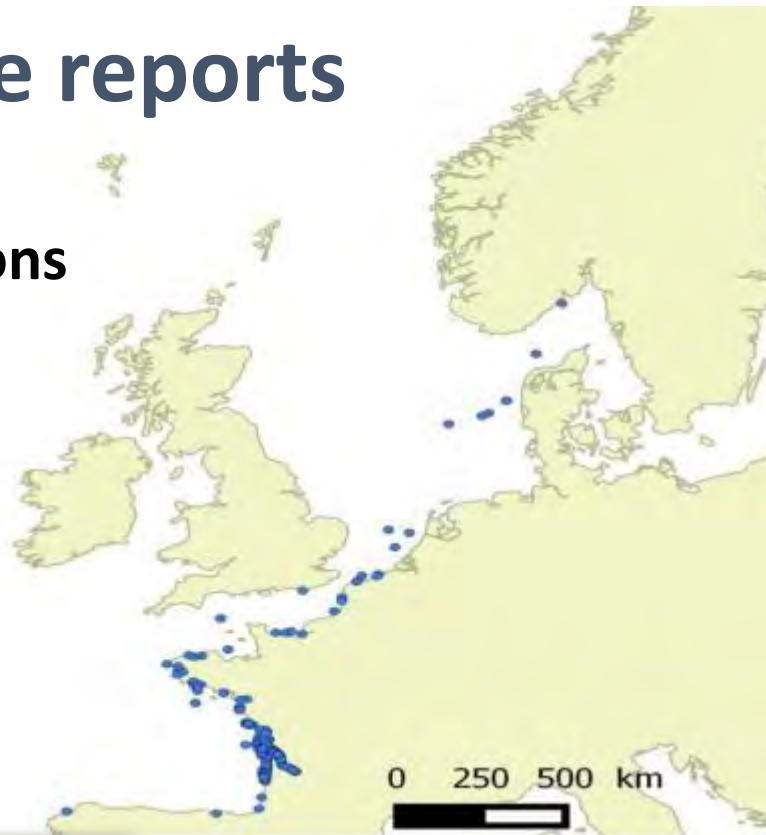


[www.sturio.fr](http://www.sturio.fr)



# Accidental capture reports

2006-2017: 1329 declarations



© Parc marin d'Iroise, 2011

- Database
- Web application STURWILD



## Sturgeon caught off Newhaven offered to Her Majesty the Queen

While out fishing from Newhaven in East Sussex, on his boat Bounty Hunter GX 445, fisherman Daniel Rasthorne was somewhat surprised to see a 14kg Sturgeon in his net, reports John Perkins.

"I have been fishing here most of my life and this was very much a first for us. My crew Max O'Gorman and Saeen Bryant were as surprised as I was, when we saw this head looking at us from the net."

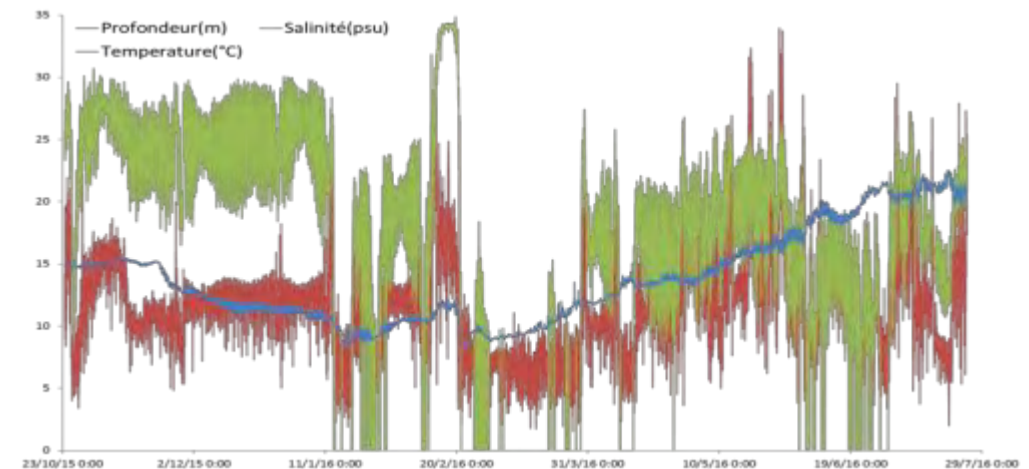
"Back on shore we took it to local fish wholesaler MCB Seafoods at Newhaven where Mike Bish suggested we offer it to Her Majesty the Queen. Her office responded with grateful 'no', but suggested it could be sold, and the money given to charity."





# Population monitoring in the Gironde estuary

2009-2016 ⇒ 841 trawling tows ⇒ 399 captures *A. sturio*





# European cooperation



© E Rochard (Irstea)



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Ebre





# Next phase

## National Action Plan 2020-2030?

- Axis 1 Monitoring of the population in the wild
  - Reduce the mortality at sea
  - Check the efficiency of stocking
  - Detect reproduction in the wild
- Axis 2 Protection of habitats and connectivity
  - Assess the carrying capacity



# Next phase

## Action plan 2020-2030?

- Axis 3 Improving the state of the *ex situ* stock and stocking of juveniles in the wild
  - Improving biotechnology of maintenance for a better fitness
  - Assessing possibilities of reintroduction in other basins
- Axis 4 Continuation of the efforts to support research and international cooperation in conservation
  - Coordination with other Action Plans
  - International cooperation



# Funding for the Action Plan implementation was provided for....

- IRSTEA:
  - Agence de l'Eau Adour Garonne,
  - Agence française de la Biodiversité,
  - Agence nationale de la recherche, département de la Gironde,
  - Ministère de l'écologie et du développement durable, Région nouvelle Aquitaine
  - Irstea.
- Migado (broodstock maintenance)
  - FEDER Nouvelle Aquitaine
  - Ark Nature
  - IGB Berlin





# HELCOM Action Plan for the protection and recovery of the Baltic Sturgeon *Acipenser oxyrinchus*

By the Baltic Sturgeon EN, Helcom S&C

Authors: Jörn Gessner<sup>1,2</sup>, Gerd-Michael Arndt<sup>2,3</sup>, Andrzej Kapusta<sup>4</sup>, Sergey Shibayev<sup>5</sup>, Alexey Gushin<sup>6</sup>, Andrej Pilinkovskij<sup>7</sup>, Justas Povliūnas<sup>7</sup>, Ruta Medne<sup>8</sup>, Santa Purvina<sup>8</sup>, Meelis Tambets<sup>9</sup>, Peter Rask Möller<sup>10</sup>

#### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to consider and adopt the HELCOM Action Plan for the protection and recovery of Baltic sturgeon.

## HELCOM-Action Plan



**for the protection and recovery of the Baltic sturgeon *Acipenser oxyrinchus***

**Action Plan for the period of 2019 - 2029**

**State 25 September 2018**



Action requested



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN JUNE 2019 ENDORSED THE  
HELCOM-ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2019 UNTIL  
2028

...

NOW IMPLEMENTATION IS DUE!





# Main threats for the recovery of the species



1. Mortality caused by accidental catch (by-catch) and illegal fishing (poaching)
2. Changes of hydrology and hydromorphology in rivers and estuaries affect spawning and nursery habitats
3. Dams block migration to spawning sites
4. Anthropogenic environmental pollution affects reproductive success
5. The introduction of allochthonous (sturgeon) species causes competition, pathogen transfer, and hybridization
6. Climate change increases water temperature, alters discharge patterns, and fauna composition



# Action Plan scope



- Based upon the reasons for decline and potential threats
- Provides a joint framework for restoration attempts and coordinated action!
- Implementing the Objectives of the Pan European Action Plan
- The AP identifies the means to implement the restoration target in 3 categories and 16 Actions
- Supported by a S&C Expert Group
- Implementation to take place on a national level





# The long-term aim!



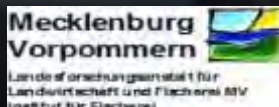
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LOODUSHOIU  
KESKUS**



**KSTU**  
Kaliningrad State  
Technical University



**VNIRO  
Atlantic  
Research  
Branch**



# Conclusion

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In order to fulfill the targets of the Pan EU AP....

- More **active involvement** of the governmental level is urgently required to bring the actors to the table regionally
- *Ex situ, in situ*, and monitoring activities need a **strong commitment** including long-term national funding
- **Setting priorities** will help to maintain the focus on the essential actions: National strategies under development
- Need to implement the **mandate for coordination** between range states by Bern Convention Secretariat.





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