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**Fifth Meeting of the Signatories
of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and
Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard
(*Otis tarda*)**

Bratislava, Slovakia, 18 – 21 September 2023

**STATUS REVIEW OF THE
MEDIUM-TERM INTERNATIONAL WORK PROGRAMME ON THE CONSERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN POPULATION OF THE
GREAT BUSTARD
(2018-2023)**

1. By signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard, Signatories endeavour to work closely together to improve the conservation status of the Great Bustard throughout its breeding, migratory and wintering range. The MOU emphasizes the need for exchanging scientific, technical and legal information to co-ordinate conservation measures and for co-operation with other Range States, relevant international organizations and recognized scientists.

2. According to MOU paragraph 8, the Signatory States shall endeavour to adopt a Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) for the Great Bustard. This should include (1) subjects for co-operative research and monitoring, (2) measures to implement the MOU and its Action Plan, as well as (3) items for which guidelines are needed to further develop and improve the measures listed in the MOU as well as in international and national work programmes.

3. Since the first Meeting of Signatories (MOS1; Illmitz, Austria, 2004), the MTIWP has been reviewed regarding its implementation and further developed at each meeting for the following intersessional period. At MOS4 (Bad Belzig, Germany, 2018), the MTIWP was aligned with the structure of part 4 - *Framework for Action* of the new MOU-Action Plan which was endorsed at that meeting. The previously existing additional '*Joint Research Programme*' was incorporated into the MTIWP 2018-2023.

4. In conjunction with agenda item 6.3, as a basis for developing an updated and (re-)prioritized MTIWP to guide implementation in the next intersessional period, it is recommended to review the current status of implementation of the MTIWP 2018-2023.

Recommended actions

5. The Meeting is recommended to

   a) provide update on the status of the measures stated in the MTIWP 2018-2023;

   b) assess progress made in the implementation of the MTIWP to inform its update and further development, as appropriate, for the next intersessional period.

Annex

Status review of the Medium-Term International Work Programme 2018-2023

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
1.1 Average annual adult survival rate is above 90% in each population	1.1.1 Reduce collision with powerlines through avoiding key areas for Great Bustard, through marking and, if necessary, even through removal of existing dangerous sections of powerlines	**Systematic data collection on collisions;** **Approaching energy suppliers;** **Organizing joint projects with energy suppliers;** **Planning process to Great Bustard conservation needs when necessary** **Providing information on effectiveness of particular bird flight diverters**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**National Authorities in collaboration with electric companies**	
	1.1.2 Prevent the occurrence of catastrophic winter mortality events through supporting the production of oil-seed rape and alfalfa at suitable undisturbed locations far from existing powerlines within the traditional wintering areas and establish capacity to clear snow from fields in emergency situations	**Prepare an information network for circumstances when the breeding populations in Central Europe migrate included in the Guidelines on Successful Wintering.**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
	1.1.3 Maintain hunting ban in all Range States and maintain efforts to stop poaching where it still occurs	**Update legislation accordingly where necessary** **Enforcement of existing legislation by anti-poaching measures** **Promote collaboration with hunting associations**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**National authorities**	
	1.1.4 Prevent collision with wind turbines in key sites and flyways for Great Bustard	**Data collection on collision through intensive monitoring** **Adequate planning of wind farms in Great Bustard habitats and flyways**	**Low**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
1.2 Average productivity exceeds 0.25 chicks per female in each population	1.2.1 Identify and apply adequate compulsory restrictions at breeding sites on agricultural practices that significantly reduce the breeding success of the species, such as mowing of alfalfa or grass according to the local breeding phenology of the species, and provide compensation to farmers	**Prepare habitat management plans and/or detailed restrictions on farming and hunting for the breeding habitats of the species where agri-environmental provisions have not been applied yet.**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	
	1.2.2 Apply nest-safeguarding and egg-rescue measures where necessary and appropriate	**Liaise with farmers associations in order to prevent disturbance**	**Low**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
		and damage to breeding birds Organize study visits to Range States where nest-safeguarding and other conservation measures related to the breeding success of the birds (including the methods of detecting breeding females, timing and location of monitoring, methods of in situ protection, etc.) are in practice in order to share experiences.				
		Organize international action to rescue eggs and chicks from emergencies, where necessary and feasible and transport them to the Rescue Centre in Dévaványa, Hungary	Medium	Ongoing	Applicable to Austria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia	
	1.2.3 Restrict/Control grazing on key breeding areas where trampling significantly reduces the breeding success	Finalize and implement the Guidelines on agri-environmental schemes	High	2018 (Guideline's finalizations); otherwise Ongoing	Applicable to: all breeding Range States	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
	1.2.4 Support extensification of agricultural practices in areas inhabited by Great Bustards, including the promotion of set-aside schemes and organic farming	**Lobbying of policy makers** **Focusing also on small populations or satellite populations**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	
	1.2.5 Monitor impact of predators on breeding success and apply predator control measures if necessary	**Finalize and implement the Guidelines on Predator Control Strategies on Great Bustard habitat, including the methodology on monitoring the potential impacts of the predators (trap cameras etc.).**	**High**	**2018 (Guideline's finalizations); otherwise: Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	
	1.2.6 Create enclosures in the breeding areas of populations if the main reason of breeding failure is predation	**Predation monitoring** **Finalize and implement the Guidelines on Predator Control Strategies on Great Bustard habitat**	**Locally high**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	
	1.2.7 Reduce human disturbance by restricting movements at display and breeding grounds as necessary	**Evaluate the impact of disturbance** **Implementation of regulations in conservation areas** **Guiding systems for the**	**Medium**	**2022**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
		public, including observation towers **Implementation of CMS Resolution 12.23 on Sustainable Tourism and Migratory Species**				
1.3 Extent of suitable habitat maintained across the range of the species	1.3.1 Designate all sites holding populations of Great Bustards as Special Protection Areas in the EU Member States or under national legislation in other countries	**Expert's visits to small populations to evaluate the situation and to propose actions locally implemented**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: Czech Republic, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Ukraine**	
	1.3.2 Introduce, or continue where they already exist, agri-environmental schemes or similar incentive measures to promote farming techniques compatible with the species' requirements and monitor the effectiveness of such measures	**Liaise with farmers associations and with authorities responsible for agriculture to promote such schemes** **CMS Secretariat to liaise with European Commission regarding the negotiations on Common Agricultural Policy (via CMS Focal Point of EU)** **Utilizing the Great Bustard as an umbrella species for biodiversity in farmlands and as an**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
		indicator species				
	1.3.3 Ensure that power lines, afforestation, irrigation, wind energy, transport and other projects which can negatively affect the Great Bustard's habitat do not take place.	**Include Great Bustards and their habitats, including flyways, into planning processes and environmental impact assessments**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
1.4 Knowledge gaps filled	1.4.1 Identify all areas for Great Bustard across its European range	**Systematic monitoring and elaboration of a detailed distribution map showing all areas regularly used**	**High**	**2021**	**Applicable to: Russian Federation, Ukraine**	
	1.4.2 Monitor the size, sex and age composition and productivity of each population, based on standardized counts in winter, spring and autumn	**Approaching all available stakeholder groups and capacities that are able to monitor** **Organize coordinated counts nationally and between neighboring countries where common populations exist: Austria-Hungary-Slovakia; Hungary-Serbia-Romania**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States and transboundary populations**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
		-Ukraine-Russian Federation				
		Investigate the limiting parameters for population stability and/or growth to better understand key factors making conservation projects successful	High	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States	
	1.4.3 Monitor and improve the effectiveness of captive breeding, rearing and release programmes	Implement the Guidelines for Monitoring of Population Parameters of Great Bustard and Effects of Management Measures on the monitoring the survival rate and breeding success of released birds.	Low	2021	Applicable to: Hungary, Germany	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
	1.4.4 Carry out comparative ecological studies on the population dynamics and the genetic structure of populations, on habitat requirements and on the effects of habitat changes and infrastructure on the populations	**Conduct ecological studies regarding the movement of individuals between leks or breeding centres, respectively (telemetry, re-sightings etc.)** **Extend the genetic studies to museum specimens or extinct populations to identify suitable populations for re-introduction**	**Medium**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
		Study the impact of new developments (energy crops, wind farms, irrigation) on populations	**High**	**2021**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
		Identify space use of non-migrating populations during the year to further understand habitat requirements and promote Great Bustard-friendly management.	**Medium**	**2022**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
		Identify the most effective high and medium voltage power line markings	**High**	**2022**	**Lead: Austria; Applicable to: all Range States**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
	1.4.5 Expand studies to improve the understanding of survival and mortality factors, and promote telemetry studies thereof	**Further investigate mortality factors including power line collision, agricultural practices, wind turbine collision etc.**	**High**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
	1.4.6 Investigate the factors influencing breeding success, including predation, and study key parameters, such as habitat availability and choice, home range and dispersal patterns to explain the difference in breeding success between the different populations Dedicate attention to the insect biomass as necessary food supply in the breeding area	**Investigate the causes of increases in predator populations and means to prevent it** **Dedicate attention to the insect biomass availability for breeding Include long-term monitoring in existing or forthcoming key parameter programs and improve the food situation by appropriate measures if needed**	**High**	**2021**	**Applicable to: all breeding Range States**	
	1.4.7 Analyze regular and irregular migratory movements, and seasonal movements of birds, promote telemetry and other marking methods thereof to better understand the meta-population structure	**Improve marking systems techniques to and application of these techniques**	**Medium**	**2022**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
	1.4.8 Study the impact of climatic change on the productivity and survival of the Great Bustard and on its habitat. If necessary, develop habitat management techniques for	**Improve monitoring by additional indicators for the impacts of climate change**	**Medium**	**Ongoing**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
	mitigating the impacts of climate change					
	1.4.9 Investigate diseases as a risk factor for the Great Bustard. Consider infectious, metabolic and other diseases and the possibility of a spill-over from other species.	Systematic collection of dead individuals and post-mortem findings by veterinarians following a systematic protocol

Liaise with competent persons to investigate the detrimental diseases relevant to Great Bustards and identify potential pathways and precautionary measures to be applied | Medium | Ongoing | Applicable to: all Range States | |
| *2.1 Effective habitat management and repatriation methods available to assist restoration of Great Bustard populations* | 2.1.1 Improve habitat for Great Bustard in formerly occupied sites, where feasible | Review historical record and elaborate a detailed distribution map on the most suitable areas and potential sites of Great Bustard habitats within its range, considering the reasons of extinctions | Medium | 2020 | Applicable to: all Range States | |

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
		Use monitor and telemetry data to better understand the Central-European metapopulation. Identify possible source/sink dynamics to improve future decision making for conservation measures	Medium	2022	Applicable to: all Range States	
	2.1.2 Develop feasibility studies and management plans to restore transboundary populations and expanding the habitats in these regions	Prepare transboundary projects for the restoration of the previously occupied and potential habitats for the shared Great Bustard populations. Promote the implementation of the CMS Guidelines on Re-introduction and Reinforcement of Great Bustards	Medium	2023	Applicable to: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Austria, Poland	
	2.1.3 Promote reintroduction projects on the basis of adequate research and feasibility studies and the respective IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations	Promote implementation of the CMS Guidelines on Re-introduction and Reinforcement of Great Bustards	Low		Applicable to: all Range States	

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators	Status as per 2023
2.2 Public awareness raised	2.2.1 Promote eco-tourism and bird watching in Great Bustard areas, under the appropriate regulatory framework to improve economic viability of Great Bustard areas	**Carry out awareness activities for the Great Bustard as a flagship species for biodiversity conservation and elaborate education tools and/or modules for both adult and child target audience.** **Monitor the impact of eco-tourism**	**Medium**	**2023**	**Applicable to: all Range States**	
	2.2.2 Promote Great Bustard conservation among stakeholders (e.g. authorities, land owners, farmers and hunters)		**High**		**Applicable to: all Range States**	
	2.2.3 Use the Great Bustard as flagship species throughout education in raising the profile of nature conservation	**See 2.2.1**			**Applicable to: all Range States**	