

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN
POPULATION OF THE GREAT BUSTARD (*Otis tarda*)**

ROMANIAN NATIONAL REPORT 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION

<p>Agency or institution responsible for the preparation of this report</p> <p>Ministry of Environment and Climate Change 12 Libertății Blvd., District 5 Telephone: +40 21 4089521 Fax: +40 21 3124227 Postal Code 040129 Bucharest Romania</p>
<p>List any other agencies, institutions, or NGOs that have provided input</p> <p>Milvus Group-Bird and Nature Protection Association</p>
<p>Reports submitted to date:</p> <p>First: 2004 (2001-2003) Second: 2008 (2004-2007) Third: 2013 (2008-2012)</p>
<p>Period covered by this report</p> <p>01.01.2008 - 31.12.2012</p>
<p>Memorandum in effect in country since:</p> <p>June, 2001</p>
<p>Designated Focal Point (and full contact details):</p> <p>Dr. Nela Miaută Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Biodiversity Department 12 Libertății Blvd., District 5 Postal Code 040129 Bucharest, Romania Telephone: +40 21 4089545 Fax: +40 21 3124227 nela.miauta@mmediu.ro nelamiauta@yahoo.com</p>

PART I. GENERAL

This questionnaire follows the structure and numbering of the Action Plan annexed to the Memorandum of Understanding to make it easier to read the relevant action points before the form is filled in. In some cases, however, sub-actions were not listed separately for the sake of simplicity and to avoid duplications. They should however be taken into consideration when answering the questions.

0. National work programme

Is there a national work programme or action plan already in place in your country for the Great Bustard pursuant to Paragraph 4(g) of the Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes

No

There was no national work programme or action plan since the Great Bustard is extinct species in the country.

1. Habitat protection

1.1 Designation of protected areas.

To what extent are the display, breeding, stop-over and wintering sites covered by protected areas?

Designation of protected areas under national law	Classification of Special Protection Areas according to the requirements of Art.4.1 of the EC Birds Directive
<input type="checkbox"/> Fully (>75%) <input type="checkbox"/> High (50-75%) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (10-49%) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low (<10%) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully (>75%) <input type="checkbox"/> High (50-75%) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (10-49%) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low (<10%) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable

According to the national law there is a Special Protection Area designated for Great Bustards, ROSPA0097 Pescăria Cefa – Pădurea Rădvani) which covers 1500 ha with relevant habitats for this population and Cefa Natural Park.

¹ The species occurs only irregularly, no regular stop-over or wintering sites identified.

What measures were taken to ensure the adequate protection of the species and its habitat at these sites?

- ❖ **Monitoring and scientific investigation on Great Bustards and their habitat in ROSPA0097 Pescăria Cefa – Pădurea Rădvani and surroundings with regulations focussing on avoidance of disturbances of species and improvement of the habitat suitability;**
- ❖ **Public awareness campaigns.**

Where are the remaining gaps?

- ❖ **Promotion of agri-environmental schemes;**
- ❖ **Reinforcement programme of Great Bustard;**
- ❖ **Elaboration, approval and the implementation of the Management Plan for ROSPA0097 Pescăria Cefa – Pădurea Rădvani;**
- ❖ **Understanding the interrelation between species for decreasing the predation pressure on juveniles and adults;**
- ❖ **Telemetry studies to improve understanding of seasonal movements, survival and mortality factors of Great Bustard population;**
- ❖ **Study the impact of climatic changes on the productivity and survival of the Great Bustard on its habitat;**
- ❖ **Effective habitat management to assist restoration of Great Bustard population.**

Are currently unoccupied, but potential breeding habitats identified in your country?

Yes

No

Not applicable²

In the past, Boianu Plain and Bărăgan Plain were breeding habitats of Great Bustard population, but there are not undertaken feasibility studies on the actual potential of these areas.

If yes, please explain how these areas are protected or managed to enable the re-establishment of Great Bustard.

1.2 Measures taken to ensure the maintenance of Great Bustard habitats outside of protected areas.

Please describe what measures have been taken to maintain land-use practices beneficial for Great Bustard outside of protected areas (e.g., set-aside and extensification schemes, cultivation of alfalfa and oilseed rape for winter, maintenance of rotational grazing, etc.).

2 Countries *outside* of the historic (beginning of 20th Century) breeding range of the species.

No Great Bustard specific measures were taken.

To what extent do these measures, combined with site protection, cover the national population?

- Fully (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)**
- Not at all
- Not applicable

Are recently (over the last 20 years) abandoned Great Bustard breeding habitats mapped in your country?

- Yes**
- No
- Not applicable

What habitat management measures have been taken to encourage the return of Great Bustard?

No specific measures for Great Bustards have been taken, but Romania took action to avoid the construction of Wind Turbines in the Great Bustard habitat.

The wind farm was planned to be constructed in the Salonta region, in the north-west of country. The area, as part of the Great Hungarian Plain, mainly consists of grasslands and cereal cultures and is known as an important breeding and wintering habitat for numerous bird species.

Until 2012, there were plans for the construction of a wind farm within and around the ROSPA0097 Pescăria Cefa – Pădurea Rădvani which provides important wintering habitat for the Great Bustard.

Since Great Bustards are particularly sensitive to infrastructures, such as wind turbines, buffer zones are recommended.

Romanian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change informed the CMS Secretariat that the Government is committed to limit conflict with Great Bustards, Saker Falcons (*Falco cherrug*), White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaetus albicilla*) and Eastern Imperial Eagles (*Aquila heliaca*) populations.

If there were any measures taken, please provide information on their impact.

1.3 Measures taken to avoid fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats.

Are new projects potentially causing fragmentation of the species' habitat (such as construction of highways and railways, irrigation, planting of shelterbelts, afforestation, power lines, etc.) subject to environmental impact assessment in your country?

Please, indicate to what extent these measures ensure the protection of the national Great Bustard population? The national population is covered by restrictions on hunting to prevent hunting-related disturbance:

X Fully (>75%)

- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable

2.2 Prevention of disturbance.

What measures have been taken to prevent disturbance of Great Bustard in your country, including both breeding birds and single individuals or small flocks on migration?

- ❖ **Awareness campaigns for the public;**
- ❖ **Inspections within the SPA by the National Environmental Guard, the rangers of the Cefa Natural Park Administration**

Please, indicate to what extent these measures have ensured the protection of the national population.

The national population is covered by restrictions on other activities causing disturbance:

- Fully (>75%)
- X Most (50-75%)**
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable

2.3.1 Prevention of predation.

What is the significance of predation to Great Bustard in your country?

The significance of predation to Great Bustard is unknown. However, predation could be a major problem due to the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and sometimes the Imperial Eagles (*Aquila heliaca*) in the potential breeding areas.

What are the main predator species?

The main predator species is the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).

What measures have been taken to control predators in areas where Great Bustard occurs regularly?

Intensified hunting of foxes was not a successful measure to control predators in areas where Great Bustard population occurs regularly due to the insufficient data.

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (predation reduced by more than 50%)
- Partially effective (predation reduced by 10–49%)
- Less effective (predation reduced by less than 10%)

X Not applicable

2.3.2 Adoption of measures for power lines.

What is the significance of collision with power lines in your country?

The significance of collision with the power lines is unknown. However, it's quite possible. The habitat's fragmentation caused by the power lines is a possible risk as well.

What proactive and corrective measures have been taken to reduce the mortality caused by existing power lines in your country?

Not the case

What is the size of the populations affected by these corrective measures?

Not the case

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (collision with power lines reduced by more than 50%)
- Partially effective (collision with power lines reduced by 10–49%)
- Ineffective (collision with power lines reduced by less than 10%)

X Not applicable

2.3.3 Compensatory measures.

What is the size (in hectares) of Great Bustard habitat lost or degraded for any reasons since the Memorandum of Understanding entered into effect (1 June 2001)?

Not the case

What is the size of the populations affected?

Not the case

Were these habitat losses compensated? Yes Partially
 No

X Not applicable

If yes, please explain how.

Were these measures effective?

Yes Partially No **X Not applicable**

Please, give details on the effectiveness or explain why they were not effective if that is the case.

3. Possession and trade

Is collection of Great Bustard eggs or chicks, the possession of and trade in the birds and their eggs prohibited in your country?

X Yes No

How are these restrictions enforced? What are the remaining shortcomings, if any?

The restrictions are covered by the following:

- ❖ **Emergency Governmental Ordinance No. 57/2007 on the regime of natural protected areas, conservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna, modified and approved by Law no 49/2011;**
- ❖ **Law No. 407/2006 of game and hunting fund modified and completed; Law No. 69/1994 on ratification of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.**

Please indicate if any exemption is granted or not all of these activities are prohibited.

Not the case.

4. Recovery measures

4.1 Captive breeding* in emergency situations.

Is captive breeding playing any role in Great Bustard conservation in your country?

Yes **X No**

Please, describe the measures, staff and facilities involved and how these operations comply with the IUCN criteria on reintroductions.

Not applicable.

4.2 Reintroduction.

Have there been any measures taken to reintroduce the species in your country?

Yes **X No**

* In effect, "captive breeding" should be read as "captive rearing" according to current practices.

If yes, please describe the progress. If there was any feasibility study carried out, please summarize its conclusions.

During the period 19-23 July 2011 was held in Saratov, the meeting of the UNESCO National Commissions representatives from Romania, Republic of Moldova and Russian Federation for discussing the possibility to reintroduce the Great Bustard population into the wild with the support of the scientific institutes and Government authorities.

There was no feasibility study carried out, but discussions took place regarding the reintroduction of the Great Bustard in Romania in the Comana Nature Park, Giurgiu County (25000 ha), Călărași County (2500 ha), Olt County (10000 ha), Arad and Timiș Counties (18000 ha) in collaboration with Hungary, Galați County (8000 ha), in collaboration with Republic of Moldova.

Until this moment, there are no conclusions about these idea.

4.3 Monitoring of the success of release programmes.

Are captive reared birds released in your country?

Yes

No

If yes, please summarize the experience with release programmes in your country. What is the survival rate of released birds? What is the breeding performance of released birds?

Not applicable

What is the overall assessment of release programmes based on the survival of released birds one year after release?

Effective (the survival is about the same as of the wild ones)

Partially effective (the survival rate is lower than 75% of the wild birds)

Ineffective (the survival is less than 25% of wild birds)

X Not applicable³

5. Cross-border conservation measure

Has your country undertaken any cross-border conservation measures with neighbouring countries?

X Yes

No

Not applicable⁴

3 No release is taking place in the country.

4 For countries which do not have any transboundary population.

Please, give details of your country's collaboration with neighbouring countries on national surveys, research, monitoring and conservation activities for Great Bustard. Especially, list any measures taken to harmonise legal instruments protecting Great Bustard and its habitats, as well as funding you have provided to Great Bustard for particular conservation actions in other Range States.

Romania (Apuseni National Park Administration, Milvus Group - Bird and Nature Protection Association) has undertaken cross-border conservation measures with Hungary (Körös-Maros National Park Directorate) through an Intergovernmental (HU-RO) Expert Group on Conservation of Biodiversity.

Monitoring activities have been carried out through a project financed by the Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013.

6. Monitoring and research

6.1.1 Monitoring of population size and population trends.

Are the breeding, migratory or wintering Great Bustard populations monitored in your country?

Yes

No

What proportion of the national population is monitored?

All (>75%)

Most (50-75%)

Some (10-49%)

Little (<10%)

None

Not applicable

What is the size and trend in the national population?⁵

Breeding/resident population

No. of adult males: **3**

No. of females: **4**

No. immature males: **2**

Trend:

Declined by ___% over the last 10 years

Stable

Increased by ___% over the last 10 years

Non-breeding population (on passage, wintering)

No. of adult males: **6**

No. of females: **7**

No. immature males: **27**

Trend: Declined by ___% over the last 10 years

Stable

Increased by ___% over the last 10 years

Unknown

For countries where the species occurs only occasionally, please give the details of known observations within the reporting period:

The ornithologists from Milvus Group-Bird and Nature Protection Association have observed Great Bustard population from February until December 2012.

The maximum number of immature individuals of Great Bustard was 27 in December 2012.

6.1.2 Monitoring of the effects of habitat management.

Is the effect of habitat conservation measures monitored in your country?

Yes

Partially

X NO

Not applicable

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.

Not the case.

What can be learned from these studies?

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

❖ It is needed for implementing measures for habitat management in accordance with biological needs of the species.

5 Only for countries where the species occurs regularly.

- ❖ Support extensification of agricultural practices in key areas for Great Bustard;
- ❖ Introduce agri-environmental schemes or similar incentive measures to promote farming techniques compatible with the species' requirements and monitor the effectiveness of such measures;
- ❖ Ensure that afforestation, wind energy, transport, irrigation and other projects which could affect the Great Bustard's habitat do not take place in areas with this species.

6.2.1 Comparative ecological studies.

Have there been any comparative studies carried out on the population dynamics, habitat requirements, effects of habitat changes and causes of decline in your country in collaboration with other Range States?

Yes **No** Not applicable

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published

Not the case.

What can be learned from these studies?

Not the case.

What are the remaining gaps where the Memorandum of Understanding could assist?

Predation is a problem for the Great Bustard population and the scientific comparative studies could offer more information about the correlation between *Otis tarda* populations and the predators' control.

6.2.2 Studies on mortality factors.

Are the causes of Great Bustard mortality understood in your country?

Yes **Partially** **No** Not applicable

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.

Studies on mortality factors and the results were not published.

What can be learned from these studies?

These studies could give us more information about the projects which can affect the Great Bustard population.

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

- ❖ Establish an appropriate National Work Programme for the management of this species;
- ❖ Establish monitoring programme to improve knowledge of Great Bustard distribution, ecology and behaviour;
- ❖ Protection of Great Bustards and their nests and eggs from threats such as disturbance, egg-collecting and predation;
- ❖ Establish a feasibility study on the opportunity of reintroduction of Great Bustard into the wild;

6.2.3 Investigation of factors limiting breeding success.

Are the factors limiting breeding success in core populations understood in your country?

Yes Partially **No** Not applicable⁶

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published

Not the case.

What can be learned from these studies?

Not the case.

What are the remaining gaps and what measures are you going to take to address these gaps?

Develop research projects of factors limiting breeding success.

6.2.4 Studies on migration.

Were there any studies on migration routes and wintering places carried out in your country?

Yes Partially **No** Not applicable

Where are the key sites and what is the size of the population they support?

The key sites are Special Protection Area ROSPA0097 Pescăria Cefa – Pădurea Rădvani, Salonta region, in Bihor County.

Wintering places of the resident population usually are inside or near the breeding areas.

The estimated size of Great Bustard population is 35-40 individuals.

Do you have any knowledge about the origin of these birds supported by ringing or other marking methods?

The birds are coming from Hungary, Dévaványa Landscape Protection Area (Tájvédelmi Körzet) within the Körös-Maros National Park.

⁶ Only for breeding countries.

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

- **There is lacking knowledge of flocks of adult during the summer and early autumn;**
- **Intensive collaboration with farmers and hunters associations;**
- **Great Bustard conservation projects on migration routes and wintering places are necessary;**
- **Cross-boundary collaboration for increasing the small Great Bustard population in Romania;**
- **Detailed monitoring to improve understanding of the interaction between released bustards and their environment;**
- **Elaboration and promotion of agri-environment schemes to improve the suitability of the 'wider countryside' for Great Bustards;**
- **Re-establishment of the Great Bustard as an integral part of the Romania avifauna.**

7. Training of staff working in conservation bodies

Is there any mechanism in place in your country to share information on biological characteristics and living requirements of Great Bustard, legal matters, census techniques and management practices to personnel working regularly with the species?

Yes **No**

Not applicable

If yes, please describe it.

Have personnel dealing with Great Bustard participated in any exchange programme in other Range States?

Yes No

Not

If yes, please give details on number of staff involved, country visited and how the lessons were applied in your country.

The experts of Milvus Group-Bird and Nature Protection Association are involved in Great Bustard project, in Hungary and Romania for conservation this species. Communication and dissemination actions are needed to develop a high profile for the project both in local communities and in key target.

8. Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustards and their habitat

What measures have been taken to increase the awareness about the protection needs of the species and its habitat in your country since signing the Memorandum of Understanding?

- ❖ **Contacts with the stakeholders of land-users, local and governmental authorities;**
- ❖ **Awareness campaigns via media, leaflets in Hungarian and Romanian languages.**

Do farmers, shepherds, political decision makers and local and regional authorities support Great Bustard conservation?

X Yes Partially No

What are the remaining gaps or problems and how are you going to address them?

- **Better dissemination of information regarding the Great Bustard population;**
- **Reducing the threats to the Great Bustard population (loss and degradation of its habitat through agricultural intensification, land-use changes and infrastructure development;**
- **Reducing the main mortality causes;**
- **Avoiding the disturbance which can disrupt feeding, mating activities and can increase the probability of collision with power lines;**
- **Monitoring the predation of mammalian predators, especially Red Fox populations;**
- **Identify and apply adequate compulsory restrictions on 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 species and provide compensation to farmers.**

9. Economic measures

Have there been any initiatives taken to develop economic activities that are in line with the conservation requirements of Great Bustard in your country?

Yes **X Partially** No Not applicable

What percentage of the population is covered in total by these measures?

All (>75%)

- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)**
- None
- Not applicable

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (more than 50% of the targeted area is managed according to the species' needs)
- Partially effective** (10–49% of the targeted area is managed according to the species' needs)
- Ineffective (less than 10% according to the species' needs)
- Not applicable

10. Threats

Please, fill in the table below on main threats to the species in your country. Use the threat scores categories below to quantify their significance at national level. Please, provide an explanation on what basis you have assigned the threat score and preferably provide reference. Add additional lines, if necessary.

Threat scores:

Critical: a factor causing or likely to cause **very rapid declines** (>30% over 10 years).

High: a factor causing or likely to cause **rapid declines** (20-30% over 10 years).

Medium: a factor causing or likely to cause relatively **slow, but significant, declines** (10-20% over 10 years).

Low: a factor causing or likely to cause **fluctuations**.

Local: a factor causing local declines but likely to cause **negligible declines at population level**.

Unknown: a factor that is likely to affect the species but it is unknown to what extent.

Threat name	Threat score	Explanation and reference
Habitat loss	Critical	Loss of natural pastures seems to be one of the most urgent problems to be resolved. There are several cases (Salonta, Valcani, Beba Veche) when grasslands used by Great Bustards population for display were transformed to arable lands and forest plantations.
Losses of eggs and chicks	Unknown	No research projects on the probability of survival of Great Bustard population until now.
Predation	Unknown	Predation could be a major problem due to the Red Fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>) and sometimes Imperial Eagles (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>) in the potential breeding areas.
Collision with powerlines	Unknown	No bird was found.
Human disturbance	Local	Grazing combined with human disturbance (shepherd) could be significant in the breeding period. Information about failed breeding due to sheep grazing was collected in the Salonta region.
Pesticides	Unknown	Toxicological studies on Great Bustard could not be done due to the small population.
Illegal hunting	Unknown	No case official declared.
Habitat fragmentation	High	Afforestation, power lines, wind mill on migration routes.

PART II. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Please report on the implementation of the country-specific actions listed for your country in Part II of the Action Plan and provide information if that is not already covered by your answers under Part I. Please describe not only the measures taken but also their impact on Great Bustard or its habitat in the context of the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan. Where you have already answered on country-specific actions in Part I, please only add a reference to the relevant answer here.

Not the case.