

Fourth 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*)

Bad Belzig, Germany, 14 – 15 March 2018

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Agenda Item 6.3

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

(Prepared by Austria, Germany and Hungary, with support from the Secretariat)

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, appropriate international organizations and recognized scientists.
2. According to MOU paragraph 8, the Signatory States shall endeavour to adopt and regularly review a Medium-Term International Work Programme 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. The **first Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) for the Great Bustard MOU was adopted** at the First Meeting of Signatories (Illmitz, Austria) in 2004 **for the period 2005-2010** (CMS/GB.1/Report/Annex 6).
4. At the Second Meeting of the Signatories (Feodosia, Ukraine) in 2008, the MTIWP was reviewed and **extended to cover the period 2009-2012** (CMS/GB.2/Report/Annex 7).
5. Based on the decisions made at the Third Meeting of the Signatories (Szarvas, Hungary) in 2013, the third MTIWP for the Great Bustard MOU was **adopted for the period 2013-2016**, which now ceases to have effect at the Fourth Meeting of the Signatories.

6. It has been decided that a **new MTIWP should be elaborated to set up new objectives** and to organize it around the new Action Plan to be adopted at MOS4 based on the “International Single Species Action Plan for the Western Palearctic Population of Great Bustard, *Otis tarda tarda*”.

7. Therefore, this draft **MTIWP 2018-2023 has been adapted to the** structure of part 4 - Framework for Action of the **new Action plan**, listing “**Results**” and “**Actions**” related to Table 3 thereof, and suggests a set of “**Measures to be taken**”. These are the determined priority objectives covering several concrete activities to be achieved in the upcoming intersessional period of five years – when it has to be reviewed or a new one adopted as will be decided.

8. Research objectives reviewed by the Joint Research Programme at the Third Meeting of Signatories (Szarvas, Hungary) in 2013 (CMS/GB/MoS3/Doc.7.4.4) were incorporated in the new MTIWP under Result 1.4 Knowledge gaps filled.

9. **Lead countries** for the particular activities are indicated along with relevant **other Range States and organizations that** would **collaborate** on the Work Programme’s implementation.

10. Funding will be needed to support the activities listed in the Work Programme in the planned **time** for their completion. Multilateral, bilateral and other sources of funding will need to be secured through funding applications prepared by lead countries and collaborator.

Action requested:

The Meeting is requested to:

- a. Provide specific comments on the draft work programme.
- b. Take note and discuss the findings and proposals of the Scientific Symposium, if any, which are or might be related to future plans and commitments in order to decide on their inclusion.
- c. Consider incorporating research objectives of the Great Bustard Joint Research Programme in the Medium-Term International Work Programme in the future.
- d. Consider extending the duration of the MTIWP from three to five years to better implement conservation methods over a long period of time.
- e. Consider the desirability of creating a working group during MOS4 to discuss the draft work programme in detail and revise as needed for the meeting’s review and subsequent adoption.
- f. Adopt the final version of the MTIWP 2018-2023 with any amendments, to replace the MTIWP (2013-2016).

Draft Medium-Term International Work Programme 2018-2023

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
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		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 emergency plan for circumstances when the breeding populations in Central Europe migrate. Establish an internet-based reporting system where the responsible people and experts notify each other in such emergencies on when and where the birds occur and what measures should be taken.	High	2021	Applicable to: all range states
	1.1.3 Maintain hunting ban in all Range States and maintain efforts to stop poaching where it still occurs	Update legislation accordingly	High	Ongoing	National Authorities
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 a habitat management plan and detailed restrictions on farming and hunting for the breeding habitats of the species where agri-environmental provisions have not been applied yet.	High	2021	Applicable to: all breeding range states

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	1.2.2 Apply complementary nest-safeguarding and captive-rearing measures where necessary and appropriate	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.	Low	2018-2023	Applicable to: all breeding range states
		Organize international action to rescue eggs from emergencies, where necessary and feasible. In particular: prepare an operational plan for the prompt management and transport of rescued eggs from emergency situations, like mowing, harvesting, grazing or spraying to the Rescue Centre in Dévaványa, Hungary.	Medium	2021	Applicable to Serbia, Hungary, Romania
	1.2.3 Restrict grazing on key breeding areas where trampling significantly reduces the breeding success				
	1.2.4 Support extensification of agricultural practices in key areas for Great Bustards, including the promotion of set-aside schemes				
	1.2.5 Monitor impact of predators on breeding success and apply predator control measures if necessary	Prepare a predator control management plan on important Great Bustard sites, including the methodology on monitoring the potential impacts of the predators (trap cameras etc.).	High	2021	Applicable to: all breeding range states

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	1.2.6 Create enclosures in the breeding areas of populations if the main reason of breeding failure is predation		Low	Ongoing	Applicable to: All breeding range states
	1.2.7 Reduce human disturbance by restricting movements at display and breeding grounds as necessary	Prepare guidelines on disturbance factors threatening Great Bustards on their habitats including a detailed guideline on restricting hunting activities on Great Bustard habitats in particular.	Medium	2022	Applicable to: all range states
1.3 Extent of suitable habitat maintained across the range of the species	1.3.1 Designate all sites holding internationally important populations of Great Bustards as Special Protection Areas in the EU Member States or under national legislation in other countries	Romania? Serbia? Ukraine?	High	Short	Applicable to: all range states
	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		High	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States
	1.3.3 Ensure that afforestation, irrigation, wind energy, transport and other projects which can negatively affect the Great Bustard's habitat do not take place in areas with internationally important numbers		High	Ongoing	
1.4 Knowledge gaps filled	1.4.1 Identify all key areas for Great Bustard across its European range	Systematic monitoring should be carried out and a detailed distribution map established showing key areas of breeding and migratory sites.	High	2021	Applicable to: Russia, Ukraine

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	1.4.2 Monitor the size, sex and age composition and productivity of each internationally important population, based on standardized counts in winter, spring and autumn	Organize coordinated counts nationally and between neighboring countries where common populations exist: Austria-Hungary-Slovakia; Hungary-Serbia-Romania -Ukraine-Russia?	High	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States
		Establish a joint Middle-European web-based database and a reporting scheme for Range States to submit monitoring data to be added to the national reports.	Low	2022	
		Compare populations to find ideal size, age and sex compositions of populations.	Medium		Applicable to: all breeding Range States
		Investigate the limiting parameters for population stability and/or growth to better understand key factors making conservation projects successful.	Medium	2022	
	1.4.3 Monitor and improve the effectiveness of captive breeding, rearing and release programmes	Update the guidelines on the marking of birds and monitoring the survival rate and breeding success of released birds.	Low	2021	Applicable to: Hungary, Germany
		Expand the tracking of birds and carry out satellite telemetry projects to mark reared and released birds for monitoring according to the existing guidelines.	Low	2022	Applicable to: Hungary, Germany

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
		Research any possible differences between "natural" and reintroduced (or restocked) populations.	Medium		All States with breeding programmes:
	1.4.4 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 mitigating the impacts of climate change		Low		
	1.4.5 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	To be completed based on concrete priority studies identified at the Scientific Symposium	Medium	2021	
		Study the impact of new developments (energy crops, wind development) on populations to predict population developments	High	2021	Applicable to: Germany
		Analyze advantages and disadvantages of different bird marking methods and update appropriate guidelines.	Low	2023	
		Identify space use of non-migrating populations during the course of the year to further understand habitat requirements and promote bustard-friendly management.	Medium	2022	

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
		Research the effectiveness of different power line markings and update guidelines on the most effective markings.	Medium	2022	
	1.4.6 Expand studies to improve the understanding of survival and mortality factors, and promote telemetry studies thereof	To be completed based on concrete priority studies identified at the Scientific Symposium.	High	Ongoing	
		Further research mortality factors including wind turbine collision, agricultural practices and power line collisions.	High	2021	Applicable to: all Range States
	1.4.7 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	To be completed based on concrete priority studies identified at the Scientific Symposium.	High	2021	Applicable to: all breeding Range States
	1.4.8 Analyze regular and irregular migratory movements, and seasonal movements of birds, promote telemetry and other marking methods thereof	To be completed based on concrete priority studies identified at the Scientific Symposium.	Medium	2022	
		Research the influence of Power lines and Wind turbines on migratory movements including winter flights and juvenile dispersal	High		
	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 another species.	To be completely based on concrete priority studies identified at the Scientific Symposium.	Low	2023	Applicable to: all Range States

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
		Information on the ecology and conservation of Great Bustard shared within the conservation and research communities through the maintenance of a web-based bibliography to be integrated/compatible with the monitor webpage	Low	Ongoing	Lead: AT Applicable to: all Range States
		Organize the 5 th Meeting of the Signatories and the preceding Scientific Symposium.	High	2023	
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	Process archive observation data and elaborate a detailed distribution map on important and potential sites of Great Bustard habitats within its range.	Medium	2021	Applicable to: all Range States
		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 a transboundary project for the restoration of the previously occupied and potential habitats for the shared Great Bustard populations.	Low	2023	Applicable to: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Austria, Poland

Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	2.1.3 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 raising awareness activities and elaborate education tools and / or modules for both adult and child target audience.	Medium	2023	Applicable to: all Range States
	2.1.4 Promote reintroduction projects on the basis of adequate research and feasibility studies		Low		Applicable to: all Range States, Poland