

**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

UNEP/CMS/GB/MOS5/Doc.6.3

**DRAFT
MEDIUM-TERM INTERNATIONAL WORK PROGRAMME
ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN
POPULATION OF THE GREAT BUSTARD
(2023-2028)**

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 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, 2004) for the period 2005-2010 ([CMS/GB.1/Report/Annex 6](#)).
4. At the Second Meeting of the Signatories (Feodosia, Ukraine, 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, 2013), the third MTIWP for the Great Bustard MOU was adopted for the period 2013-2016 (see [CMS/GB/MoS3/Doc.7.3](#)).
6. Based on the decisions made at the Fourth Meeting of the Signatories (MOS4, Bad Belzig, Germany, 2018), the [fourth MTIWP](#) for the Great Bustard MOU was adopted for the period 2018-2023, which now ceases to have effect at the Fifth Meeting of the Signatories.
7. It has been decided at MOS4 that a new MTIWP should be elaborated to set up new objectives and to organize it around the Action Plan which was adopted at MOS4 and is based on the *International Single Species Action Plan for the Western Palearctic Population of Great Bustard, Otis tarda*.

8. Therefore, similarly to the MTIWP (2018-2023), the new draft MTIWP (2023-2028) is 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.
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.

Recommended actions

11. The Meeting is recommended to:
 - a) provide specific comments on the draft work programme;
 - b) take note of 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) discuss the draft work programme contained in the Annex of this document, in detail and revise it as needed for the meeting’s review and subsequent adoption;
 - d) adopt the final version of the MTIWP (2023-2028) with any amendments, to replace the MTIWP (2018-2023).

Draft Medium-Term International Work Programme 2023-2028

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
<p>1.1 Average annual adult survival rate is above 90% in each population</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Systematic data collection on collisions;</p> <p>Approaching energy suppliers;</p> <p>Organizing joint projects with energy suppliers;</p> <p>Planning process to Great Bustard conservation needs when necessary</p> <p>Providing information on effectiveness of particular bird flight diverters</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>National Authorities in collaboration with electric companies</p>
	<p>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</p>	<p>Prepare an information network for circumstances when the breeding populations in Central Europe migrate included in the Guidelines on Successful Wintering.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Applicable to: all Range States</p>

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	1.1.3 Maintain hunting ban in all Range States and maintain efforts to stop poaching where it still occurs	<p>Update legislation accordingly where necessary</p> <p>Enforcement of existing legislation by anti-poaching measures</p> <p>Promote collaboration with hunting associations</p>	High	Ongoing	National authorities
	1.1.4 Prevent collision with wind turbines in key sites and flyways for Great Bustard	<p>Data collection on collision through intensive monitoring</p> <p>Adequate planning of wind farms in Great Bustard habitats and flyways</p>	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
		<p>and damage to breeding birds</p> <p>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.</p>			
		<p>Organize international action to rescue eggs and chicks from emergencies, where necessary and feasible and transport them to the Rescue Centre in Dévaványa, Hungary</p>	Medium	Ongoing	Applicable to Austria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia
	<p>1.2.3 Restrict/Control grazing on key breeding areas where trampling significantly reduces the breeding success</p>	<p>Finalize and implement the Guidelines on agri-environmental schemes</p>	High	<p>2023 (Guideline's finalizations); otherwise Ongoing</p>	<p>Applicable to: all breeding Range States</p>

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	1.2.4 Support extensification of agricultural practices in areas inhabited by Great Bustards, including the promotion of set-aside schemes and organic farming	<p>Lobbying of policy makers</p> <p>Focusing also on small populations or satellite populations</p>	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	<p>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.).</p>	High	<p>2023 (Guideline's finalizations); otherwise: Ongoing</p>	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	<p>Predation monitoring</p> <p>Finalize and implement the Guidelines on Predator Control Strategies on Great Bustard habitat</p>	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	<p>Evaluate the impact of disturbance</p> <p>Implementation of regulations in conservation areas</p> <p>Guiding systems for the</p>	Medium	<p>2024 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing</p>	Applicable to: all breeding Range States

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		<p>public, including observation towers</p> <p>Implementation of CMS Resolution 12.23 <i>Sustainable Tourism and Migratory Species</i></p>			
<p>1.3 Extent of suitable habitat maintained across the range of the species</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Expert's visits to small populations to evaluate the situation and to propose actions locally implemented</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Applicable to: Czech Republic, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Ukraine</p>
	<p>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</p>	<p>Liaise with farmers associations and with authorities responsible for agriculture to promote such schemes</p> <p>CMS Secretariat to liaise with European Commission regarding the negotiations on Common Agricultural Policy (via CMS Focal Point of EU)</p> <p>Utilizing the Great Bustard as an umbrella species for biodiversity in farmlands and as an indicator species</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Applicable to: all Range States</p>

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	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	2023 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	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 -Ukraine-Russian Federation	High	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States and transboundary populations
		Investigate the limiting parameters for population stability and/or growth to better	High	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
		understand key factors making conservation projects successful			
	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	2023 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	Applicable to: Hungary, Germany
	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

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
		Study the impact of new developments (energy crops, wind farms, irrigation) on populations	High	2024 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	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	2025 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States
		Identify the most effective high and medium voltage power line markings	High	2023 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	Lead: Austria; Applicable to: all Range States
	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	Investigate the causes of increases in predator populations and means to prevent it Dedicate attention to the insect biomass availability for breeding	High	2025 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	Applicable to: all breeding Range States

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	Dedicate attention to the insect biomass as necessary food supply in the breeding area	Include long-term monitoring in existing or forthcoming key parameter programs and improve the food situation by appropriate measures if needed			
	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	2025 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	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 mitigating the impacts of climate change	Improve monitoring by additional indicators for the impacts of climate change	Medium	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States
	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	Medium	Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
		<p>identify potential pathways and precautionary measures to be applied</p>			
<p>2.1 Effective habitat management and repatriation methods available to assist restoration of Great Bustard populations</p>	<p>2.1.1 Improve habitat for Great Bustard in formerly occupied sites, where feasible</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>2024 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing</p>	<p>Applicable to: all Range States</p>
		<p>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</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>2026 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing</p>	<p>Applicable to: all Range States</p>

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	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	2027 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	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
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	2027 (Finalization); otherwise: Ongoing	Applicable to: all Range States

Expected Result	Action	Measures to be taken	Priority	Time table	Lead Country and collaborators
	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
<i>To be adapted (place holder)</i>					
<i>To be adapted (place holder)</i>					