



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



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

*National Park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel, Burgenland, Illmitz, Austria
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CMS/GB.1/5/Add.1
Agenda item 7.0

OVERVIEW REPORT

(Prepared by Birdlife International on behalf of the CMS Secretariat)

1.0 Introduction

1. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (MoU) the Secretariat shall prepare an overview report compiled on the basis of all information at its disposal pertaining to the Great Bustard. It shall communicate this report to all Signatories, signing Organisations and to all other Range States.
2. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of the MoU, MoU Signatories that are also Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) should in their national report to the CMS Conference of the Parties make specific reference to activities undertaken in relation to this Agreement. At the same time, MoU signatories not Party to the Convention shall be invited to prepare, after the adoption of their national work programme, a report on the implementation of the MoU both of which they should then communicate to the Secretariat.
3. By letter dated 26 March 2004 the Secretariat provided to all MoU signatory Range States, non-signatory Range States and signing organisations an indicative reporting guidance for Parts I and II of the Great Bustard Action Plan. As of 23 July 2004 the following Signatories had submitted their national reports to the Secretariat: Austria, Albania, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia. The Czech Republic submitted a report though it is not an MoU signatory. In addition, the report draws from national reports submitted by Signatories and non-Signatories who are also Parties to CMS: Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Responses submitted by the EU Member States to BirdLife International in the framework of reviewing the European Action Plan for Great Bustard were also taken into account in the case of Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. Finally, information available to BirdLife International in the form of data, project or threat reports, as well as, information available on the Internet was also used.
4. The structure of this report follows that of the indicative reporting guidelines. Corresponding action points from the Action Plan are indicated in square brackets. This report does not repeat the information provided in the national reports. It only summarizes the main issues.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number, and will not be distributed at the meeting. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copy to the meeting and not to request additional copies.

2.0 Status of Great Bustard in the Agreement Area and beyond

5. The status of the species is assessed here on the basis of the information available to BirdLife International as part of the Birds in Europe 2 database. More detailed and up-to-date information is available in some of the national reports.

6. In general, the species' decline has been somewhat reduced in the last decade compared to the period of 1970-1990. However, the decline of very small populations has continued (e.g., Slovakia) and the species has gone extinct in Moldova and most probably also in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania as a breeding species. The decline of the German population has also continued. The Hungarian population is now overall stable, but this is not a general trend across the country. Some populations keep declining (e.g., Bihar, Heves, Borsodi-Mezőség), while others are increasing (e.g., Kisalföld and Kiskunság). The Ukrainian population was reported also as being stable. The Austrian population has increased significantly and the increase of this transboundary population raises hopes for the future increase of the small population in Slovakia and for the natural re-colonization of the former breeding areas in the Czech Republic.

7. Outside of the agreement area, the species population is regarded stable in the Iberian Peninsula, but the fragmentation of the population still continues. There is an increase reported from Russia, while the population is further decreasing in Turkey.

Table 1 European population of Great Bustard based on information collected for Birds in Europe 2 (*in prep*) by BirdLife International

Country	Years	Population size (in individuals)	Trend (in % between 1990-2000)
Austria	1998 – 2002	74 – 140	Increasing 30 – 49
Bulgaria	1995 – 2002	0 – 10	Fluctuating 80 – 80
Czech Republic	2000 – 2000	1 – 4	Decreasing 80 – 80
Germany	1995 – 1999	73 – 95	Decreasing 20 – 29
Hungary	1998 – 2002	1,100 – 1,200	Stable 0 – 19
Moldova	1996 – 2000	0 – 0	Extinct 100 – 100
Portugal	2002 – 2002	500 – 1,500	Stable 0 – 19
Romania	1990 – 2002	0 – 5	Fluctuating 20 – 29
Russia	1995 – 2000	5,500 – 8,000	Increasing 20 – 29
Serbia & Montenegro	2000 – 2002	30 – 36	Stable 0 – 19
Slovakia	2000 – 2003	8 – 16	Decreasing 50 – 79
Spain	1998 – 2002	23,000 – 23,000	Stable 0 – 19
Turkey	2001 – 2001	500 – 1,000	Decreasing 20 – 29
Ukraine	1990 – 2000	500 – 720	Stable 0 – 19

3.0 Implementation of the Action Plan

8. **Protected Areas [AP 1.1]:** The Action Plan requires responsible authorities to designate key breeding sites and key migration and wintering sites throughout the range of the species as protected areas and manage them according to the species' requirements. This includes also areas that are essential for the reestablishment of the species. In the *breeding range*, **Austria**, **Hungary** and **Germany** have reported that the leks and a significant part of the breeding areas are already protected. In **Germany** and **Austria** the sites are mainly designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the EU Birds Directive. In **Hungary**, the proposed SPAs cover almost the entire range used by the species and will significantly expand the coverage provided by national designation.

There is only a very small area (75 ha) under temporary protection (for 10 years since 2001) in the **Czech Republic**, where grassland was re-established. No area has yet been designated in **Slovakia**, but Syst'ovské Polia is proposed as an SPA. In **Germany** and **Hungary** large areas were purchased by conservation organisations. There is no recent information available from **Bulgaria** and **Romania**. In the *non-breeding* period the Middle-European population migrates only occasionally and often only short distances. Usually, the birds stay within traditional winter quarters nearby to their breeding places. No regularly used sites were reported from **Croatia**. On the other hand, it was reported that after 30 years the species was recorded in Bedati, Karavasta region, and Kopliku, Shkodra region, in **Albania** in 2002 and 2003. These are the same areas where the species was reported from by Lamani and Puzanov in 1962. The national programme for the protection of Great Bustard in Albania foresees the designation of these areas as protected areas. Unlike the Middle-European population, the majority of the population from Saratov, Russia migrates regularly to the Kherson and Zaporizhzhya districts in Crimea, Ukraine¹.

9. **Habitat quality outside of protected areas [AP 1.2]:** The Action Plan calls for maintenance or improvement of habitat quality outside of protected areas. It calls for extensification, introduction of appropriate crop rotation, including alfalfa and oilseed rape, and set-aside schemes supported by incentives provided under agri-environmental schemes. Agri-environmental schemes support appropriate habitat management in **Austria**, **Germany** and **Hungary**. In 2003 measures targeted at Great Bustard habitat conservation were introduced in **Austria** under the ÖPUL programme, the national agri-environmental scheme, and they covered approximately 5,500 hectares. In **Hungary**, the first set aside scheme has been implemented in the Moson Project on the Kisalföld since 1992. Pilot zonal agri-environmental schemes were also introduced in Hungary at five areas in 2002. They cover 276,845 hectares in total; however payments made at “only” 31,429 hectares. In **Germany**, farmers also receive payments for extensive management. The agri-environmental schemes include appropriate crop rotation with alfalfa or oilseed rape and address timing of cultivation in all countries. In the **Czech Republic** no measures were taken to influence land use for breeding Great Bustard because of the potentially high costs in the intensively cultivated region. In **Slovakia**, the State Nature Conservancy rents 75 hectares and manages it as a set-aside maintained with mowing. In the *non-breeding ranges* there is no information about targeted measures taken to address the species feeding requirements during migration or winter.

10. **Preventing habitat fragmentation [AP 1.3]:** The Action Plan calls for prevention of afforestation and making infrastructure development, in particular construction of new roads, highways, railways and irrigation, subject of environmental impact assessment (EIA). **All countries** who have sent a report but **Albania** reported that their EIA procedures cover larger projects causing habitat fragmentation. In **Austria** also afforestation would require permission from the relevant authorities. In addition, the ÖPUL rules also prevent afforestation. In **Germany** there is a serious discussion on the impact of wind farms at the Karower Platte on the remaining population of the species². In **Hungary**, many activities are subject to EIA, however a few critical activities, such as afforestation and construction of new field roads or power lines less than 120 kV, still do not require EIA prior to their construction outside of protected areas. In **Slovakia** the construction of the D2 motorway and power lines caused loss of part of the population. However, no further habitat fragmentation has happened since ratification of the MoU. Slovakia has also raised the issue of habitat fragmentation caused by the wind turbines in Austria close to the border.

11. **Protection from hunting [AP 2.1]:** The Action Plan calls for prohibiting any hunting where it is considered necessary at the time Great Bustard are expected to occur in the area. These

¹ Y.Andrushchenko: About census of Great Bustard, wintering in the south of Ukraine
(<http://ornitology.narod.ru/english/expeditions/2002/drofa.html>)

² <http://www.grosstrappe.de/index.htm>

restrictions should be then strictly enforced. The species is officially protected in all countries either as a (strictly) protected species (**Albania, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia**) or as game bird with a year-around closed season (**Austria, Germany**). However, illegal killing of birds is reported from **Albania** and **Croatia**. Disturbance associated with hunting on other species (i.e., Roe Deer, Wild Boar, Pheasant and Hare) is a problem in some countries (**Austria, Hungary** and **Slovakia**). However no measures were reported except for **Hungary** where the timing of hunting can be regulated within nationally protected areas.

12. **Preventing disturbance [AP 2.2]:** The Action Plan calls for preventing disturbance of display and breeding sites through restricting or controlling access to breeding sites and adoption of the timing and techniques of land management. In **Austria, Germany** and **Hungary** the agri-environmental measures include provisions to reduce disturbance of the species during the breeding season. In addition, the management plans of the protected areas in **Hungary** include provisions to restrict potentially disturbing activities through e.g., regulating the timing of mowing, prescribing mowing from the centre outwards and regulating eco-tourism and horseback riding. The enlargement of a former military airport on the border of the Kiskunság National Park was stopped because of a nearby lekking ground. **Slovakia** has reduced disturbance caused by agricultural works by prohibiting aerial spraying of pesticides and fertilizers. In **Austria** the provincial nature conservation bodies agreed with the armed forces that the breeding sites are not disturbed during the breeding season in bustard areas close to the border, where soldiers usually patrol the border line. In addition, there is a general agreement with farmers and hunters to keep all disturbances in bustard areas to a necessary minimum. The surveillance officers in cooperation with hunters and farmers try to reduce disturbance through leisure activities such as dog walking, biking, nordic walking, jogging and horse riding. There are agreements with the armed forces to prevent unnecessary disturbances caused by flying over the area by aircraft and helicopters. There are efforts to implement similar agreements with the private aviation bodies as well.

13. **Preventing predation [AP 2.3.1]:** The Action Plan provides for the control of foxes and feral dogs in areas where Great Bustard occurs regularly. However, other species such as Hooded Crow *Corvus corone cornix*, Badger *Meles meles* and Pine Marten *Martes martes* may also damage eggs. Control measures are taken in **Austria, Germany, Hungary** and **Slovakia**, but hunting of foxes seems not to be very effective. In **Germany** enclosures of 10-20 hectares large are applied to exclude foxes and give higher chance for successful breeding.

14. **Adopting measures for power lines [AP 2.3.2]:** According to the Action Plan, existing lines which cross Great Bustard areas should be buried or marked prominently. New lines should not be built across Great Bustard areas. Measures have been taken in **Austria, Germany, Hungary** and **Slovakia** as well as in **Croatia** from the non-breeding range. However, these measures were generally implemented only on a limited scale and it appears additional action is required. The main limitation seems to be the very high cost of these actions. **Slovakia** has reported that visual marking was not effective. Based on the result of testing different methods during the last years, now **Austria** is preparing a LIFE application to address this threat at a larger scale. **Hungary** is also addressing this issue through using LIFE and Structural Fund support, but also these sources were able to provide only limited help. A survey of determining the level of mortality in Crimea was implemented in 2001-2002 by the Ukrainian Bird Conservation Union, the national BirdLife Partner.

15. **Compensatory measures [AP 2.3.3]:** According to the Action Plan any activities which will create new loss or degradation of Great Bustard habitat or longer term disturbance of the species should be compensated by appropriate measures. There is no report about implementing this measure in practice apart from the re-establishment of small grassland in the **Czech Republic**.

Compensatory measures do not appear to be applied consistently in the Range States for the benefit of the species.

16. **Possession and trade [AP 3.0]:** The Action Plan requires that the collection of eggs or chicks, the possession of and trade in the birds and their eggs should be strictly prohibited and the restrictions controlled. The general species conservation measures are in place in all countries that have sent a report to the Secretariat or to the EU (i.e., Albania, Austria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia) as this requirement is also covered by CITES, the Bern and Bonn Conventions and the EU Birds Directive. The species is also protected in Bulgaria and Ukraine. There is no information available whether the species is fully protected in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro or Romania. In **Austria** there is an all-year ban on hunting. The collection of eggs or chicks, the possession of and trade in the birds and their eggs is strictly prohibited and the restrictions are controlled. Authorization is only granted out of nature conservation interests. In Austria, no specimen is in private or other possession such as zoos. In **Hungary**, some individuals are kept in captivity at the Great Bustard Rescue Station, Dévaványa, and some in zoos. No specimen is in private possession. Activities like breeding in captivity, supplementing of any population with individuals from foreign populations, the artificial exchange of genetic matter, the reintroduction or introduction and the export, import or transport of any individual are subject to authorization of the Ministry of Environment and Water. Because the species is a game species in **Germany**, in theory, hunters have exclusive rights to the birds found dead.

17. **Captive breeding in emergency situations [AP 4.1]:** The Action Plan provides for the possibility of taking eggs into artificial incubation from threatened nests if there is not possible to guarantee the successful. Captive management of threatened nests form part of the routine of conservation of Great Bustard only in **Germany** and **Hungary**. Some, unsuccessful, trials on captive breeding were carried out by the Szent István University in Sződ, Hungary, between 1992 and 1995. The breeding programme was then cancelled. In Austria captive breeding of bustards is only carried out in exceptional circumstances, when a nest has been abandoned. Only four eggs were incubated between 2001 and 2004 in the years 2002 and 2004. There is no specific station for Great Bustards in Austria. Injured or seriously ill Great Bustards are taken to the "Eulen- und Greifvogelstation" (owl and bird of prey station) Haringssee. In 2004 two chicks hatched in captivity were taken to the Great Bustard Rescue Station at Dévaványa which can provide more specialized care.

18. **Reintroduction [AP 4.2]:** The Action Plan requires that reintroduction actions should be undertaken only at those sites where feasibility studies (following the IUCN criteria for re-introductions) have been carried out with success. There were no attempts reported to reintroduce the species. In the **Czech Republic** there are hopes that the species may re-establish itself from a nearby population Austria as a breeding species. Re-colonization of former breeding sites in the vicinity of the Kiskunság National Park is reported from **Hungary**. **Romania** has indicated in its report to CMS COP7 that it is considering re-introducing the species, but no information is available about the implementation of a feasibility study.

19. **Monitoring of the success of release programmes [AP 4.3]:** The Action Plan requires that the survival of chicks bred in captivity and of chicks hatched from artificially bred clutches should be closely monitored, as well as the survival and breeding performance of adults released into the wild. Release programmes should be permanently reassessed and discontinued if birds are failing to survive under natural conditions. In **Germany**, first clutches are taken and incubated artificially. Juveniles are released into the wild when they are 6 weeks old. The success of release programme is monitored, but no more detail is provided in the German report to the recent review of the implementation of the action plan in the EU. In **Hungary** birds are released in the autumn. Success

of release is low because many released birds are predated mainly by foxes. Therefore the main emphasis is now on *in situ* protection of threatened nests and preventing conflicts with agricultural works through timing of farming operations. A new method was tried in 2003 by fencing around a 400 ha large area. This way the main predators like foxes were closed out, but otherwise the bustards can live in a natural environment and become wild birds. As the first experiences have shown (second season) the wild Great Bustards occupy this area continuously. Unfortunately, a high proportion of the birds released into the enclosure died of unclear reasons in 2003. In **Austria** only two captive reared birds were released in 2002 and they were intensively monitored.

20. ***Cross-border conservation measures [AP 5.0]:*** The Action Plan requires that Signatories harmonise their legal instruments in order more efficiently to conserve and manage Great Bustards. Great Bustard populations which are shared by two or more countries should be the subject of bi- or multilateral programmes to ensure that there is appropriate coordination of national surveys, research, monitoring and conservation activities. A cross-border Great Bustard conservation programme exists around the **Austrian-Hungarian-Slovakian-Czech** border for the common population found in these three countries. The society called **Pannonische Gesellschaft für Grosstrappenschutz** was established with the members keeping contact on a regular basis. Joint efforts include exchange of census data and the sharing of experience on habitat management. The **Förderverein Großtrappenschutz (FGS)** collaborates with experts in **Ukraine** and **Hungary** within the area of the MoU. (Also it does so with Russian and Spanish experts outside of the MoU area). *Ad hoc* information exchange exists between **Hungary** and **Croatia** and **Serbia** when birds leave Hungary during severe winters. **Ukraine** exchange information with Russia as well. No collaboration is known amongst **Bulgaria** and **Romania**, but here even the status of the species is unknown.

21. A scientific symposium is to be held in association with the first meeting of the MoU signatories on 14-15 September 2004.

22. ***Monitoring of population size and population trends [AP 6.1.1]:*** According to the Action Plan efforts should be made to monitor the basic parameters of all Great Bustard populations, such as size and trends, by applying methods which lead to comparable results, at all breeding and wintering sites. Monitoring of populations is well established in **Austria, Germany, Slovakia** and **Hungary**. The monitoring became more intensive again in the **Czech Republic** since 2002. However, it is important to ensure that several synchronised counts are carried out annually in this transboundary region and the data are stored and analyzed in a GIS database. In the non-breeding countries generally there is no systematic monitoring except of **Ukraine** where regular monitoring of the wintering population has taken place every winter since 1998/99. This is mainly due to the fact that there are only a few areas where the species occurs regularly far from the breeding places except of **Albania** and **Ukraine**. Methods are standardized to some extent at national/regional level, but not across the range.

23. ***Monitoring of the effects of habitat management [AP 6.1.2]:*** The Action Plan requires that studies should be carried out on the effects of habitat protection measures, implementation of agro-environmental regulations, etc. These studies should preferably be done at sites where the population has been well monitored for a number of years. Habitat conservation measures have been monitored in **Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary** and **Slovakia**, but no conclusive information was provided. In some countries this is due to the fact that agri-environmental measures are only introduced not long time ago. Impacts of the Moson Project in **Hungary** are closely monitored and the results are published. The LIFE project submitted by Hungary includes a significant component of monitoring the impact of habitat conservation measures and information will be summarized nationally.

24. **Comparative ecological studies [AP 6.2.1]:** According to the Action Plan a comparative analysis of existing data on population dynamics, habitat requirements, effects of habitat changes and causes of decline between the populations in different Range States should be conducted in order to redefine conservation strategies in the future. There have been no comparative ecological studies implemented between Range States since the MoU took effect³. The most important comparative studies are Faragó, S., Ena, V., and Martinez, A. (1987): Comparison of the state of the Great Bustard stocks in Hungary and Spain In: Faragó, S. (ed.): Proceedings of the CIC Great Bustard Symposium in Budapest, on June 2nd 1987.: 51-63. and Litzbarski, H., Block, B., Block, P., Holländer, K., Jaschke, W., Litzbarski, B. & Petrick, S. (1996): Untersuchungen zur Habitatstruktur und zum Nahrungsangebot an Brutplätzen der Großtrappen in Spanien, Ungarn und Deutschland. - Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege in Brandenburg 5: 41–50.

25. **Promotion of studies on mortality factors [AP 6.2.2]:** According to the Action Plan all individuals found dead should be examined for the causes of mortality. This, together with field studies and monitoring of marked individuals, should help to identify the direct or indirect impact of land use on Great Bustard mortality. Reasons of mortality are studied more or less systematically in **Austria, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia**. Targeted searches are carried out when birds go missing in **Austria**. In **Hungary** more information is available on mortality factors affecting eggs and chicks collected during nest safeguard activities. Although all adult birds found dead are examined to identify the cause of death, the information gained this way are less conclusive. Recently, available information is also not summarized systematically at national level, but significant improvement is expected from the LIFE project.

26. **Investigation of factors limiting breeding success [AP 6.2.3]:** According to the Action Plan the factors which may have influence on breeding success shall be investigated in all countries with breeding populations. In **Austria** intensive studies have been carried out but no conclusions reached yet. In the **Czech Republic** the main mortality factor was agriculture. In **Germany** currently the predation by foxes is the main cause of breeding failure. In **Hungary**, predation and agricultural activities are responsible for the low reproductive rate of the species. According to the model constructed by Faragó (1992) the reproduction rate of the Hungarian population is 0.6 which is only enough to sustain the population. Breeding success of the small population in **Slovakia** is also monitored.

27. **Studies on migration [AP 6.2.4]:** According to the Action Plan studies should be made to identify the migration routes and resting habitats of the Great Bustard and especially of key sites along such routes and in wintering areas. Ringing and studies involving satellite telemetry should be planned and implemented for those purposes. Local or short distance movements of birds are well understood in all countries. Captive reared and then released birds in **Germany** and **Hungary** are ringed and/or have wing tags. In **Germany** some birds were also marked with radio transmitters. Similarly, birds in Saratov, **Russia**, were also equipped with radio transmitters and proved the origin of the birds observed in **Ukraine** in winter. According to our current knowledge, birds winter in large number only in Crimea, Ukraine within the MoU area. In addition, there are two sites, Bedati and Kopliku in **Albania** which are suspected to hold the species regularly. IBA data from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Eastern Turkey indicate that a second migration route along the Caspian coast may also exist.

28. **Training of staff working in conservation bodies [AP 7.0]:** The Action Plan recommends that personnel working regularly in Great Bustard areas (agronomists, biologists, wardens, etc.) should receive specific training on Great Bustard matters, especially their biological characteristics

³ 1 June 2001.

and living requirements, legal matters, census techniques and management practices. Also, communication and cooperation between the various sectors involved (e.g., farmer, hunter and nature conservation organisations, tourist companies and state authorities) should be intensified. Activities in this direction were reported from the Range States with breeding population, but not from the potential wintering ranges except **Ukraine** where a small team exists and **Albania** where the national programme for the species foresees training of members of NGOs. A national working group for the species exist in **Hungary** which facilitates exchange of experience between organisations working at different parts of the country. In **Austria** and **Germany** specialised NGOs promote exchange of experience. Collaboration between conservationist, farmers and hunters is no active at least in Austria, Germany and Hungary.

29. ***Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustards and their habitat [AP 8.0]:*** The Action Plan recommends using Great Bustard as a flagship species to protect steppes, dry grasslands and suitable agricultural landscapes. Furthermore, farmers, shepherds, the general public and decision-makers should be subject of targeted information campaigns to secure their collaboration and adopt their management practices to the species' requirements. The species has a high profile in the countries where it breeds. Intensive media and awareness raising campaigns (articles, posters, stickers, leaflets) and liaison with local land users took place in **Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia**. Dedicated websites exist in **Austria**⁴ and **Germany**⁵. Great Bustard conservation work is presented to the general public at certain sites in **Austria, Germany and Hungary**. There is a high level of acceptance already in place in these countries which is proved by allocation of significant resources to finance agri-environmental schemes targeted at the species' conservation and by the high up-take of this schemes by farmers. Organisations such as the "Interest Group European Protected Area Parndorfer Platte – Heideboden" and the "Green World" in Austria or the "Cötkény Regional Development Association" in Hungary bring together different interest groups who now realize the importance of the species' conservation.

30. ***Economic measures [AP 9.0]:*** The Action Plan recommends developing economic activities which are not harmful to the Great Bustard to compensate land users for any damage they may experience as a result of conservation activities. Economic incentives are available for land-users in **Austria, Germany and Hungary** which are well received in Austria and Hungary, but less successful in Germany. The Moson Project in Hungary has demonstrated a different approach. Habitat management for Great Bustard may have positive impact on other species such as Hare *Lepus europeaus* and Roe Deer. Here the local agriculture company has started to manage 1,232 hectares of land partly as rotational fallow partly sown by cultures preferred by the species. Although it has lost income farming, which was anyway not very profitable because of the soil conditions required irrigation to grow maize, it has earned more from hunting of the increased population of Hare and Roe Deer.

4.0 Evaluation

31. Based on the synthesis of the national reports and other available information the following achievements can be recognized:

- The Great Bustard habitats currently used by the species are now largely protected, or will be soon protected in the EU Member States as Special Protection Areas.

⁴ www.grosstrappe.at

⁵ <http://www.grosstrappe.de/index.htm>

- Management of the species' habitat has significantly improved in Austria and Hungary in recent years as a result of the introduction of incentive schemes for farmers and large-scale land acquisition in the latter by conservation authorities.
- EIA processes are in place in most countries, although some improvement might be needed in some to be effective in preventing negative impacts of infrastructure developments.
- The species is now legally protected from hunting, however illegal shootings still occur.
- Possession and trade of the species specimens is prohibited in all countries who have sent a report.
- The species has a very high profile amongst the farmers and the public in Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. This high profile has helped to attract funding for habitat conservation measures.
- Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia collaborate closely to protect their transboundary population.
- German expertise and financial assistance has contributed to the better understanding of the origin of the wintering Great Bustard population in Crimea, Ukraine.

Less progress has been achieved in the following fields:

- Protecting areas for re-establishment of the species and as wintering areas;
- Reducing the mortality caused by predation and powerlines;
- Applying compensatory measures for habitat loss; and
- Ensuring the protection of the species during severe winters when the partially migrating population leaves its traditional wintering places close to their breeding areas and moves into countries where it does not occur regularly.