



**26<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**30<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*5 – 8 May 2026, Bonn, Germany*

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## SECRETARIAT REPORT

### **Administrative matters – Staffing in the Secretariat, Projection of the financial situation in 2026**

In accordance with Resolution 9.1: Financial and Administrative Matters (Budget 2023–2026) and Standing Committee decisions, the 2026 regular-budget post occupancy of the EUROBATS Secretariat is: Executive Secretary, full time; Programme Officer, 80 percent; and two Administrative Assistants, both at 80 percent. From January to June 2026, the Scientific Officer has an additional 20 percent post occupancy for drafting the EUROBATS Vision and Strategic Plan, financed by a voluntary contribution from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment.

CMS Family agreement secretariats also provide mutual short-term support when staff capacity is limited. EUROBATS staff supported the AEWA Executive Secretary recruitment process and the organisation of the AEWA MoP, while an AEWA staff member will support the organisation of the EUROBATS Joint StC26/AC30 meeting.

Following increases in the General Service salary scale for the Bonn duty station, the Secretariat revised the 2026 financial projection and prepared an adjusted budget reflecting higher G-staff costs, while identifying savings in other lines to remain within the approved ceiling. The increases amount to 9.6 percent retroactive from 1 December 2024, a further 8.6 percent from 1 December 2025, and an expected 5.2 percent from 1 December 2026. Analysis of unavoidable expenditure, including staff salaries, Umoja costs, IT services, web maintenance as well as expenses already processed or in process, shows that the remaining balance is very limited and should be retained for contingencies. The Secretariat therefore engaged with regular donor Parties to ensure that the Joint StC26/AC30 meeting and MoP10 are not adversely affected and wishes to extend its sincere gratitude to the Governments of Germany, Luxembourg, Monaco and Croatia for their voluntary contributions towards meeting costs.

Additionally, meeting costs will be reduced by providing half-board accommodation to delegates, thereby lowering DSA, and by limiting sponsorship for meeting delegates. Funding was denied to two countries with economies in transition due to arrears exceeding three years.

### **National reporting - new Online Reporting System**

In June 2025, the Secretariat was informed that UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) intends to discontinue support for the old Online Reporting System, with the transition period ending in June 2026. To ensure that the EUROBATS reporting deadline before MoP10 in mid-August 2026 would not be affected, the Secretariat negotiated the transfer of the EUROBATS National Reports questionnaire to the new ORS in early 2026, without cost implications, as no such costs had been announced or accepted by EUROBATS.

The Secretariat adapted the questionnaire to the new ORS, tested it and published it on the new reporting platform. No major issues have been reported by the Parties so far.

After the current reporting cycle is completed, longer-term service arrangements for support and maintenance will need to be negotiated, with EUROBATS ORS costs considered as part of a CMS Family-wide approach.

### **Preparations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of Parties**

EUROBATS will hold its 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in Valletta, Malta, from 10–13 November 2026. In early February, with strong support from the host, the Environment and Resources Authority of Malta, the Secretariat undertook a preparatory mission to discuss and confirm the venue at the Grand Master's Palace, hotel arrangements, side activities and other organisational matters.

The Secretariat is currently finalising the draft Host Government Agreement and completing the necessary security-related preparations for the UN meeting.

### **EUROBATS Projects Initiative (EPI)**

The following two EPI projects are currently being funded:

1. "Conservation and monitoring and protecting vulnerable cave-dwelling bat communities in Racha Karst Massif, West Georgia: Biodiversity assessment and community engagement", implemented by the Institute of Vertebrate Biology CAS, Brno, Czech Republic, in collaboration with the Institute of Zoology, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia;

2. “Bat indicator 2.0”, implemented by BatLife Sweden, Uppsala, Sweden.

The implementation of the second project was significantly delayed because the implementing partner had to be changed. The initial applicant, BatLife Europe, registered in the Netherlands, was unable to provide all financial and administrative documentation required from implementing partners, particularly NGOs, under the new UNEP Partnership Policy introduced in 2024.

The new Partnership Policy procedures created a disproportionate administrative burden for small-scale funding agreements within the CMS Family, as they were largely designed for larger donors and projects. Although UNEP in October 2025 introduced “Simplified Interim 2024 Partnership Policy Procedures for Implementing Partners”, these are of limited relevance for EPI projects. The simplified procedure only provides that verification of the partner on the UN Partners Portal is sufficient and triggers automatic validation in the UNEP Partners Portal, in case of partnerships with NGOs executed through a small-scale funding agreement, where the total value does not exceed USD 200,000. However, such validation does not exempt the partner from the due diligence procedure.

The only EPI project application submitted for funding in 2026 was “Gating the most important bat caves in Strandzha Nature Park” by the Bulgarian Ecological Society. While the EPI assessment group positively assessed its conservation benefits, the Secretariat raised concerns about the required permits, in particular for installing grilles at cave entrances within a Natura 2000 site.

The application lacked clear evidence of the necessary permits, details on the caves concerned and grille specifications, and a justification of the expected benefits for bats. Following consultation with the National Focal Point, the Secretariat requested clarification on the permit process and informed the applicant of the due diligence documentation required under UN rules. The required permits and documentation remain pending.

The Secretariat is therefore asking the Parties to consider future implementation of the EPI resolution in view of the UNEP Partnership Policy and due diligence it imposes on the implementing partners.

### **Outreach and cooperation within the CMS Family**

The Executive Secretary represented EUROBATS at the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP 15), held in Campo Grande, Brazil, from 23–29 March 2026.

On 22 March, she participated in the High-level Segment, “Connecting Nature to Sustain Life”, as a panellist in the session on infrastructure and migratory species. She highlighted EUROBATS as a global example, with over 20 years of experience in developing sustainable policy and practice on migratory species and renewable energy infrastructure, particularly wind turbines.

During the opening session, she presented the EUROBATS report on progress since CMS COP14 in protecting the 55 bat species listed under the Agreement and occurring in the EUROBATS area. She highlighted advances in areas such as bat habitat conservation, impact of climate change and heatwaves, renewable energy, light pollution and online trade in bats, as well as two new guidance documents addressing bats in transport infrastructure and building insulation, and two further guidance documents in preparation on reducing the impacts of offshore wind turbines and on bat rescue and rehabilitation.

At the COP15 CMS Side Event: “Promoting Migratory Bat Conservation in Sustainable Energy Planning: Bridging Policy, Wind Energy, and Migration Knowledge Gaps” organized by Bat Conservation International & Laboratório de Ciência em Biodiversidade – UFLA in collaboration with Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, and the CMS Energy Task Force, the Executive Secretary participated as a panellist and promoted EUROBATS resolutions and guidance on bats and wind turbines as tools for putting conservation policy into practice.

On the margins of CMS CoP15, bilateral meetings were held with delegates from EUROBATS Parties and non-Party Range States, as well as the international organisations involved in bat conservation.

As part of future global outreach activities, the Secretariat is pleased to announce that the Executive Secretary and Scientific Officer have been invited to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> in-person Global Union of Bat Diversity Networks (GBatNet) meeting in Baltimore, USA, from 7–11 June 2026, at the expense of the organiser.

### **Publications and EUROBATS website**

The Secretariat published online versions of EUROBATS Publication Series No. 10, “Guidance on the Consideration of Bats in Traffic Infrastructure Projects”, and No. 11, “Guidelines for Bats, Insulation and Lining Materials” in English in December 2024, with support from the governments of Germany and Monaco.

French and German translations of both publications were produced in 2025 with a voluntary contribution from Switzerland, which also covered the layout of the translations of Publication No. 11. The layout of both language versions of Publication No. 10 will be completed this year with generous support from Germany. Printing of Publications No. 10 and No. 11 is currently not planned due to lack of funds and challenges linked to the distribution of printed materials (e.g. ecological footprint and waste of paper due to outdated versions becoming redundant).

In April 2026, the Secretariat commissioned Dr Lena Godlevska (Ukraine) to review and update the manuscript "Rabies in European bats. Information for professionals, volunteers and stakeholders" (2024) in line with recent scientific literature. The consultant will also coordinate updates to existing translations (French, German, Dutch, Ukrainian, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, and other available language versions), with additional translations into Polish, Czech and Montenegrin announced.

The new EUROBATS website, based on an updated Drupal system, was launched in September 2025 and has since been used successfully for online registrations for AC29 and the Joint StC26/AC30 meeting. The Secretariat continues to update the website and correct inconsistencies.

### **International Bat Night - 30<sup>th</sup> event in 2026 and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2027**

As the first Bat Night took place in 1997, the 30<sup>th</sup> International Bat Night will be celebrated during the last full weekend of August 2026, on 29–30 August. The following year will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Bat Night.

Thanks to a generous voluntary contribution from the Government of Germany for 2026, the Secretariat plans to produce an animated video on bat migration and EUROBATS, like those produced by AEWA for its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as well as additional promotional material, preferably in digital form to reduce distribution costs and environmental impact.

The Secretariat kindly invites Parties and Observers to consider organising anniversary events and using the occasion to promote bat conservation through social media and other platforms.

### **EUROBATS Strategic Plan**

Following the mandate given by the Standing Committee at its 25<sup>th</sup> meeting in June 2025, the Secretariat initiated the development of the EUROBATS Vision and Strategic Plan, with financial support from the Government of Switzerland.

A kick-off workshop was held in hybrid format during AC29 in November 2025, drawing on experiences from CMS, AEWA, the Bat Conservation Trust and the Swiss bat conservation system. Based on comments received, the Secretariat prepared an initial draft, which was discussed at a second workshop on 18 March 2026 and made available for further comments.

A third workshop was held on 22 April to discuss proposed amendments. The Secretariat will prepare an updated draft for presentation and discussion at StC26/AC30 meeting.

### **Secretariat Workplan**

At its 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> meetings, the Standing Committee requested and approved the format of an annual Secretariat work plan listing activities and related staff days, which has since been updated annually for the period June to May.

Before its 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Secretariat was also requested to prepare an overview of tasks arising from EUROBATS resolutions currently in force. The Standing Committee subsequently requested this overview to be combined with the annual work plan in a single integrated document.

The present Secretariat Work Plan 2026–2027 responds to that request by bringing together the administrative and operational elements of the annual work plan with tasks deriving from resolutions in force, providing a comprehensive overview of the Secretariat's work in support of the Agreement.

Once the Meeting of the Parties adopts the EUROBATS Vision and Strategic Plan, the Work Plan can be amended to reflect the agreed strategic goals and targets.