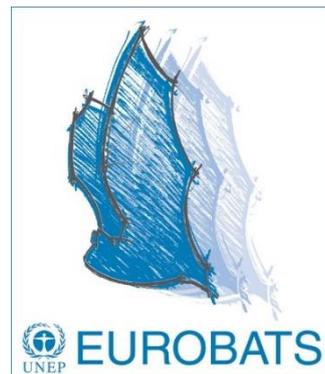


## 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee

Sofia, Bulgaria, 6 June 2019

### Report of the Chair of the Advisory Committee



The 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Committee took place in Skopje, North Macedonia, from 1-3 April 2019. Ca. 80 delegates from 44 countries, the IUCN and several NGOs, took part in the meeting.

Serbia joined the Agreement as a new Party, whereas at the time of the meeting, Bosnia and Herzegovina has completed the procedure of accession but the entry into force is pending due to small formalities that need correction in the instrument of accession to the Depositary. Yet, for the scopes of the meeting, the Country was already regarded as a Party.

A new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee were to be elected. I, Prof. Danilo Russo, had the great honour of being elected Chair of the Advisory Committee, while Ms. Ruth Petermann from Germany was elected as Vice-Chair. I herewith take the chance to praise the outstanding work done by the previous chair, Dr. Ferdia Marnell, whom I had the great pleasure to assist as the former Vice-Chair.

The new Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the EPI Evaluation Group were also elected. In consideration of the excellent work thus far carried out, Professor Stéphane Aulagnier was re-elected as the Chair, and all other members confirmed (Croatia/ Ms. Daniela Hamidović, Ukraine/ Dr. Lena Godlevska, United Kingdom/ Mr. Tony Hutson, Netherlands/ Mr. Peter Lina, North Macedonia/ Professor Branko Micevski, Jordan/ Professor Zuhair Amr), plus, as a new member, Mr. Ioseb Natradze (Georgia).

Among the activities done by EUROBATS in the last year, the Secretariat announced that the new volume EUROBATS Publication Series No. 9 titled “Guidance on the conservation and management of critical feeding areas and commuting routes for bats” was published in March 2019, and that in October 2018, Publication Series No. 8 “Guidelines for consideration of bats in lighting projects” was also released. Finally, the Secretariat announced that the joint EU-EUROBATS multi-species Action Plan (2018 - 2024) was approved in November 2018 and thus is in force.

As usual, much of the meeting focused on the activity of the Intersessional Working Groups (IWG). After the reporting of activities done by the IWG in the past quadrennium, it was established that the following IWG will be needed to tackle the goals set in the Conservation and Management Plan:

1. IWG on Insect Decline as a Threat to Bat Populations in Europe
2. IWG on Monitoring and Indicators
3. IWG on Bats and Public Health
4. IWG on Bats and Light Pollution
5. IWG on Bats and Wind Turbines
6. IWG on Bats and Climate Change
7. IWG on Bats Rescue and Rehabilitation
8. IWG on Bats, Insulation and Lining Materials
9. IWG on Impact of Roads and Other Traffic Infrastructures
10. IWG on Monitoring of Daily and Seasonal Movements of Bats
11. IWG on Education
12. IWG on Evaluation criteria for Assessment Reports Concerning Bats
13. The ad hoc Working Group on the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Agreement
14. IWG on Purpose-Built Man-Made Roosts
15. The ad hoc Working Group on the Amendment of the Agreement
16. IWG on Autecological Studies
17. The ad hoc EPI Evaluation Group

Croatia also proposed that an IWG focused on Evaluation of the Work of the Advisory Committee is established, but this will be discussed further during the following AC meetings. Moreover, it was decided to establish an ad hoc WG to review the methodology of evaluating conservation status of bat species in the Habitats Directive Article 17 reports over the EU territory.

Below, I summarize the objectives set by the IWGs that convened during the meeting.

#### **1. IWG on Bats and Light Pollution**

The IWG is expected to collate relevant literature in the area of light pollution and bats, possibly revise the guidelines if needed, and submit a revised version of the guidelines (if required) to the EUROBATs member countries. The IWG is also considering translating the guidelines into other languages.

## **2. IWG on Insect Decline**

The topic was divided in different topics/subgroups in order to develop a document, as follows: 1) nutritional requirements by food for bats; 2) knowledge on the diet of EUROBATS bat species; 3) main reasons of insect biomass decline; 4) major threats from insect decline to bat species; 5) compilation of good practice examples increasing insect biomass.

## **3. IWG on Evaluation Criteria for Assessment Reports**

Based on Resolution 8.10, this IWG will develop a set of criteria for evaluating the quality of assessment reports. The Administrative Focal points will be asked whether this kind of evaluation criteria existed in their countries, and if so, to communicate them. This information will then be collected and used as a template for further work on the IWG's tasks.

## **4. IWG on Bats and Wind Turbines**

New issues were discussed as the work plan of the IWG. Among the most relevant points, it was decided that the cumulative effect of off-shore wind turbines on bats should be considered, information on sensitivity maps gathered, and possible collaboration with the ARCADIS project sought. The Secretariat was asked to inquire Parties and Non-Party Range States on collection of mortality data two months before each forthcoming AC.

## **5. IWG on Education**

The new objectives set by this IWG include classification of the educational material collected so far, circulation of the final version of the introductory page, preparation of a reference page on EUROBATS website, generation of suggestions for children competitions, and a picture/drawing competition to be shown at the next MoP.

## **6. IWG on Communication, Bat Conservation and Public Health**

This IWG will continue its work aimed at reviewing attempts to correct misrepresentations on the role of bats as vectors of zoonoses too often claimed in absence of scientific evidence.

## **7. IWG on the Impact of Roads and other Traffic Infrastructures on Bats**

This IWG has prepared a draft of the EUROBATS guidelines on the effects of roads and other traffic infrastructure which will be refined over the following months.

## **8. IWG on Monitoring of Daily and Seasonal Movements of Bats**

This IWG will work to check the information on bat movement presented in country reports and ask scientific focal points about references on movements. It will also

establish cooperation with bird banding, gather information on migration, stopping overs and corridors, and favour international activities aimed at surveying migration.

**9. Ad hoc WG on the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Agreement**

This IWG is working on Version 2 of the Guidance document which will incorporate changes arising from MoP8. The document will appear on the EUROBATS website in the next months.

**10. IWG on Monitoring bats and Indicators**

This IWG will: a) update the “*Guidelines for Surveillance and Monitoring of European Bats*” including a section on the methods needed to estimate population trends and develop indicators; b) review the reports on national capacity needs; c) if needed to accompany the guidelines, revise *Resolution 2.2: Consistent Monitoring Methodologies*, *Resolution 5.4: Monitoring Bats across Europe* and *Resolution 6.13: Bats as Indicators for Biodiversity*; and d) revise *Resolution 4.6: Guidelines for the Issue of Permits for the Capture and Study of Captured Wild Bats*

**11. IWG on Bats and Climate Change**

This IWG will mostly work on the identification of traits that make European bats vulnerable to climate change, and to pursue this goal it will foster cooperation with EU COST Action CA 18107, and particularly Work Group 1 of the Action. I also act as chair of the Action’s Management Committee, whereas Dr Orly Razgour leads Action’s WG1 besides being an active member of this IWG, aspects that will surely grant tight cooperation between the two initiatives. This has paramount importance to gather high-quality information on life traits from bat populations across Europe and ensure a comprehensive coverage of traits’ geographic variation.

**12. IWG on Bats, Insulation and Lining Material**

This IWG will work on completion of guidelines and will also cooperate to organize a three-day workshop in the Czech Republic concerning this topic.

**13. IWG on Bat Rescue and Rehabilitation**

The main aim of this IWG will be to finalize the guidelines, whose draft will be circulated among Parties and Non-party Range States for comments and suggestions.

As final notes, I wish to remark the outstanding work made by the IWGs in addressing practically all critical topics of bat conservation biology from a perspective that integrates science and conservation, which is vital to support policies and implement effective

management among Parties. The EUROBATS publications today constitute irreplaceable reference documents to implement management of bat populations across Europe and beyond, as confirmed by their ever-growing popularity among conservationists, scientists and policy makers. There are some key factors behind the continuous success of the AC initiatives, including the outstanding work made by the Secretariat in facilitating realization of all tasks, the crucial assistance provided by the Scientific Officer, whose painstaking work plays a vital role in ensuring implementation of the goal set by the IWGs, and the commitment of IWG conveners and members. I am sure that full success will be achieved by all IWG activities in the next years and that EUROBATS will confirm and even expand its overwhelming impact and international prestige in securing a brighter future to bat conservation.

Prof. Danilo Russo

Chair of the Advisory Committee

May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019