



8th SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

5 - 9 October 2021, Budapest, Hungary

DRAFT REVISED FORMAT AND GUIDELINES FOR AEWA INTERNATIONAL SINGLE AND MULTI-SPECIES ACTION PLANS

Introduction

The 7th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA adopted in December 2018 the Revised [Format and Guidelines for AEWA International Single and Multispecies Action Plans](#) (Doc. AEWA/MOP 7.22), as presented by the AEWA Technical Committee. The revised format was applied to the AEWA International Species Action Plans developed for the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*), the Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) and the White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) which were all also adopted at MOP7.

In accordance with Article II.1 of AEWA “Parties shall take co-ordinated measures to maintain migratory waterbird species in a favourable conservation status or to restore them to such a status. (...)”. The long-term goal for species recovery plans under AEWA is thus usually determined as restoring the species/population in question to a Favourable Conservation Status, as outlined also in the revised International Species Action Plan format. Although some previously adopted Species Action Plans have included numerical indicators based, for example on population viability analyses, there has been no systematic attempt to determine when AEWA populations prioritised for action-planning can actually be considered to be in a Favourable Conservation Status.

As such, it is proposed to include the establishment of Favourable Reference Values as a standard element to the AEWA Action Plan format. This has already been done during the management planning processes for the Barnacle (*Branta leucopsis*) and Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) during the previous triennium as well as the action-planning process for the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) during this triennium. With respect to the Management Plans it should be noted, however, that for populations with population regulation objectives, the favourable reference values need to be established before setting the population management targets to ensure that the management is not compromising the Favourable Conservation Status.

Including Favourable Reference Values as a standard element of AEWA Action Plans

Adding the establishment of Favourable Reference Values as a standard element to the AEWA Action Plan format will align the Goal and Purpose of the AEWA action plans with the legal obligations under the Agreement by establishing thresholds for population size, range size and availability of habitat at which each population covered by the Plan can be considered to be in a favourable conservation status.

The experience thus far has shown that the process to establish favourable reference values for migratory waterbird populations takes time and may not be possible to be carried out within the regular action-planning process itself. Ideally the favourable reference values should be established before the adoption of the Action Plan, so that they can be included directly into the Plan itself already during the drafting phase. However, should this not be possible or feasible, it is

proposed to include a mandate for the establishment of favourable reference values in the Action Plan and for them to be determined amongst the Range States during the implementation phase.

The proposal is therefore to include the following text on establishing FRVs in the Action Plan Format, which provides the mandate for the work to be carried out if it was not possible to establish the FRVs during the action-planning phase:

- Favourable Reference Values (FRVs) for all [insert number of populations covered by Action Plan] populations (and their respective management units, if deemed applicable) will be elaborated and agreed on amongst the Principle Range States during the implementation phase of the Action Plan within its first full cycle of implementation.

This would be complemented by the following addition to the Guidance:

- Establishing favourable reference values for each population covered by the Action Plan, as well as for the management units thereof (if applicable), is a crucial step as it provides the reference for assessing whether a population is in a favourable conservation status as per the legal requirements of AEWA. Numerical target thresholds will also allow for better monitoring of progress towards the Action Plan goal.
- The approach for establishing the favourable reference values will need to be agreed amongst the respective Range States for each population, as it will vary depending on the distribution of the population during its annual cycle and the data available for the species. Favourable reference values for AEWA-listed populations will be established in accordance with the CMS definition of Favourable Conservation Status which has four criteria (population dynamic, range, habitat and historical levels) and the population is considered to be in unfavourable status if it does not meet any of the criteria or its future prospects are negative. More detailed guidance on the interpretation and establishment of favourable reference values is under development by the AEWA Technical Committee building on existing work under other relevant international frameworks¹.
- Establishing favourable reference values for migratory waterbird populations is time consuming and it usually requires the establishment of national favourable reference values by Range States (at least by the identified Principle Range States). It may not be possible to be carried out within the regular action-planning process itself. If this is the case, the standard text providing the mandate to establish favourable reference values should be included in the Action Plan as per the format above. Note that management units will most likely only be established for populations subject to Adaptive Harvest Management Programmes. The reference to management units can therefore be omitted for populations which are not foreseen to be subject to adaptive harvest management.
- Ideally, however, the favourable reference values should be established before the adoption of the Action Plan whereby these could be included directly into the Plan itself already during the drafting phase, directly under the Action Plan Goal and Purpose.

A few minor additional related changes were made in the guidance text to correspond with the proposed introduction of the FRVs. No further changes are being proposed at this time.

¹ In the interim, Action Plan compilers are advised to follow the key concepts and approaches presented in the explanatory notes and guidelines under the EU Habitats Directive Article 17. [DG Environment. \(2017\). Reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive: Explanatory notes and guidelines for the period 2013-2018. Brussels: European Commission](#)

The draft revised format and guidelines were approved for submission to MOP8 by the Technical and Standing Committees at their 16th meeting on the 25-29 January 2021 and 16th meeting on 4-6 May 2021, respectively.

Action Requested from the Meeting of the Parties

The Meeting of the Parties is requested to review the draft revised format and guidelines for AEWA International Single and Multi-Species Action Plans and to adopt it for further use.

**DRAFT REVISED FORMAT AND GUIDELINES FOR
AEWA INTERNATIONAL SINGLE AND
MULTI-SPECIES ACTION PLANS**

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For the
Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of
African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

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Introduction to the Revised AEWA International Action Plan Format

AEWA International Species Action and Management Plans remain one of most vital and practical tools under the Agreement for the coordinated international conservation and sustainable use of migratory waterbirds. These Plans represent the quintessence of AEWA: cooperation across flyways for a common defined goal.

Although good progress has been made with regard to the development of the AEWA action- and management planning process as well as with regard to establishing international coordinating mechanisms for adopted Action and Management Plans, there is still much room for improvement particularly with regard to the implementation of adopted AEWA Plans, as outlined in the [Overview of the Stage of Preparation and Implementation of AEWA International Single Species Action and Management Plans](#) presented to the 6th Session of the Meeting of the AEWA Parties in November 2015 by the AEWA Secretariat.

On the basis of the conclusions and recommendations presented therein, AEWA Parties adopted [Resolution 6.8 on the Adoption and Implementation of International Single Species and Multi-species Action and Management Plans](#). The Meeting of the Parties highlighted, in particular, the need to revise the current AEWA Species Action Plan format in order to accommodate for Multi-Species Action and Management Plans as well as to make AEWA Plans more implementable, accessible and practical for policy-makers and implementing agencies in order to increase implementation. The need was also recognised for Action Plan activities to be even more targeted and to correspond better with the set objectives and goals, in an effort to increase their delivery.

Following the request from MOP6, a revision was facilitated by Wetlands International under the auspices of the AEWA Technical Committee building on the previous [format adopted in 2008](#). Subsequent further work by the Technical Committee and Secretariat during the triennium 2019-2021 has led to the introduction of a few revisions and additions to the format, including the inclusion of a provision for the establishment of Favourable Reference Values for all populations covered by AEWA Action Plans in future.

This document consists of two parts: the revised format itself in **section A** as well as detailed guidance regarding the facilitation of AEWA action planning processes and the completion of the format outlined in **section B**. It is hoped that this revised format, including revised guidance, will serve to further strengthen the development of International Species Action Plans under the Agreement and subsequently also assist in strengthening the level of implementation of adopted AEWA Plans.

It should be noted, however, that action planning under AEWA remains an evolving process as the Agreement bodies, as well as all involved partners continue to learn and introduce improvements over time. As our experience grows, further changes to the format and guidance captured here may be required over time.

A. Format

Overview:

This section lays out the actual **FORMAT**, according to which AEWA International Species Action Plans shall be developed. The new revised format groups the content to be included under the following **EIGHT** headings:

- Front Cover
- Inside Front Cover
- 1 - Basic Data
- 2 - Framework for Action
- Annex 1 – Biological Assessment
- Annex 2 – Problem Analysis
- Annex 3 – Justification of Conservation Objectives
- Annex 4 - References

Section B. ‘Action Planning Guidelines’, contains further information and guidance on how each section of this Format is to be completed, including guidance on the facilitation of species action-planning processes under the Agreement.

Front Cover

- AEWA International Single Species or Multi-Species Action Plan for the [*insert: species’ English name + scientific name - also mention for which sub-species or population if relevant*];
- Lifespan of Plan;
- Portrait/picture of the species;
- Logos of the organisations leading on the production of the plan, donors supporting the planning process and MEAs or other international frameworks that adopted the Plan.

Inside Front Cover

- Titles of MEAs or other international frameworks which have adopted the Plan, organisations leading on the production of the plan and donors supporting the planning process;
- Compiler(s) including contact details;
- List of contributors (names and countries and/or organisations);
- Date of adoption (and number of edition if not the first edition);
- Lifespan of Plan;
- Milestones in the production of the Plan;
- Name and contact details of the official AEWA International Species Working/Expert Group or other existing Species Working Group(s) (if applicable) including the following text: “*Please send any additional information or comments regarding this [Action/Management] Plan to the [Working/Expert] Group, email: [xxx].*”, or specify another more appropriate contact, including an email address.
- Recommended citation, including ISBN, if applicable.

Introduction

- One paragraph outlining justification for the International Species Action Plan.

1 – BASIC DATA²

- Species and populations covered by the Plan;
- List and map of Principal Range States³;
- If applicable: list of potential Survey Range States as well as potential Range States hosting breeding and/or non-breeding numbers below 1% of the biogeographic population threshold as identified during the action-planning process;
- Global, Regional and sub-regional Red List status;
- International legal status (as applicable, with regard to geographic range of the species/population in question):
 - AEWAs Table 1 status
 - CMS
 - CITES
 - Bern Convention
 - EU Birds Directive
 - Others, if applicable
- In addition, as applicable, the following text shall be included for species/populations occurring in the EU (can be included as a footnote):

“As the [*insert species name*] is listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, the species should be subject of special conservation measures concerning its habitats, in order to ensure survival and reproduction in its area of distribution. EU Member States should classify in particular the most suitable territories in number and size as Special Protection Areas for the conservation of the species.

Member States shall also take the requisite measures to establish a general system of protection for the [*insert species name*], prohibiting in particular deliberate killing or capture by any method or keeping birds; deliberate destruction of, or damage to, species nests and eggs or removal of nests, taking eggs in the wild and keeping these eggs even if empty; deliberate disturbance particularly during the period of breeding and rearing, in so far as disturbance would be significant having regard to the objectives of this Directive. Derogations from these provisions may be possible in the absence of other satisfactory solutions, for particular reasons, specified in the Directive.”

² The Basic Data shall be limited to 1-2 pages.

³ Include the following footnote in relation to Principle Range States: Each Contracting Party to AEWAs is equally responsible under the Agreement for all the AEWAs species/populations they host as per the obligations set out in the AEWAs legal text. All the countries which host a specific species (whether in small or large numbers) are considered Range States for that species. The identification of Principle Range States in AEWAs Action Plans, is an approach used to prioritise coordinated international conservation efforts to those countries considered to be crucial for ensuring the favourable conservation status of the species/population in question. It should be noted that, under no circumstances does the identification of Principle Range States in AEWAs International Species Action Plans, diminish the legal obligations of potential remaining Range States which are Contracting Parties to AEWAs to equally ensure the adequate protection and conservation of the species/populations in question, including through implementation of relevant actions from the respective Species Action Plan.

2 - FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

- **Goal:**
- Indicator and method of verification for goal:

- **Purpose:**
- Indicator and method of verification for purpose:

- Favourable Reference Values (either following option A or B):

Option A) Favourable Reference Values [if established during the action-planning process]

Option B) Favourable Reference Values (FRVs) for all [insert number of populations covered by Action Plan] populations (and their respective management units, if deemed applicable) will be elaborated and agreed on amongst the Principle Range States during the implementation phase of the Action Plan within its first full cycle of implementation.

- **Action framework table** showing the **objectives** (including indicators and methods of verification for each objective), associated **problems, results** and **actions** with their priorities, time-scales and organisations responsible for implementing them. Produce a separate table for each objective:

Table 1. Framework for Action

<i>Direct problem:</i>	<i>Objective 1:</i>				
Underlying problems⁴	Result	Action	Priority	Time scale	Organisations responsible
	Result 1.1	1.1.1. Description of action Applicable to: [insert range states]			
		1.1.2. Description of action Applicable to: [insert range states]			
	Result 1.2	1.2.1. Description of action Applicable to: [insert range states]			

⁴ For details, see Annex 2.

Annex 1. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT⁵

- Distribution throughout the annual cycle;
- Habitat requirements;
- Survival and productivity;
- Description of population size and trend for each geographic population, including by country provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Population size and trend by country

Country	Breeding numbers	Quality of data	Year(s) of the estimate	Breeding population trend in the last 10 years (or 3 generations)	Quality of data	Maximum size of migrating or non-breeding populations in the last 10 years (or 3 generations)	Quality of data	Year(s) of the estimate
<i>Country 1</i>								
<i>Country 2</i>								
Overall								

Annex 2: PROBLEM ANALYSIS

- General overview
- Full list of all identified threats or problems (including the name of the threat or problem; description; estimate of the scope, severity, timing and impact)
- Figure 2. Problem tree

Annex 3: JUSTIFICATION OF CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

- Predicted population trajectories for 3 generations under (at least) the following scenarios:
 - Business-as-usual (no recovery or control measures taken)
 - Action Plan implemented as planned
- Description of methodology used, including models, their parameters and assumptions.

Annex 4. REFERENCES

- List of the most relevant literature used for the preparation of the Action Plan.

⁵ The Biological Assessment shall be limited to maximum 1-2 pages in length (excluding table 2).

B. Action-Planning Guidelines

Overview:

This section 'B. Action-Planning Guidelines' provides guidance to support planners and compilers in the development and drafting of AEWA International Species Action Plans following the AEWA format outlined above and provides explanatory notes for each section.

These guidelines are intended to support planners in developing the following types of Plans using the AEWA format:

- *International Single Species Action Plans (ISSAP),*
- *International Multi-Species Action Plans (IMSAP).*

In addition, this section also provides guidance related to the facilitation of action-planning processes under AEWA, which are carried out in cooperation with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

1. AEWA Action-Planning Process

1.1. Introduction

In addition to the Framework for AEWA International Species Action Plans as outlined above, this chapter also runs through the main steps of the actual action-planning process itself, which is carried out by the selected lead compiler(s) or drafting team, in close cooperation with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

AEWA International Species Action Plans are adopted by the Meeting of the AEWA Parties. But before a Plan reaches the stage of being presented for adoption, it has undergone a long development process beginning with the prioritisation of the species/population in question for an Action Plan by the AEWA Technical Committee to an internationally negotiated Plan ready for presentation to the AEWA governing bodies and adoption by the Parties.

The action-planning process as described below has been developed under the Agreement in an effort to **ensure a transparent process that includes all relevant stakeholders and brings together the best available scientific knowledge**. Both of these elements – the transparent and inclusive process, as well as working on the basis of best available science – are crucial steps for enabling the subsequent implementation of International Species Action Plans once adopted.

It should be noted that action-planning under AEWA remains an evolving process as the Agreement bodies as well as all involved partners continue to learn and introduce improvements over time. As these are international, consultative processes mainly dependent on the availability of external funding, the exact timetables etc. will also vary from case to case. The main steps as well as the roles and responsibilities of each of the various actors in the process, however, remain the same.

As this guidance is geared, in particular towards potential International Species Action Plan compilers and/or drafting teams, the **NINE** essential steps requiring their involvement are highlighted throughout the process below.

1.2.Facilitation of Action-Planning Processes under AEWA

1.2.1. Establishing the Process

Following the prioritisation of species/populations under the Agreement most urgently in need of an international Action Plan by the AEWA Technical Committee, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat liaises with the various stakeholders to see which plans can be developed within which timeframe. The successful development of new plans is dependent on many factors such as the support of range state governments and the availability of species' experts. Sufficient resources - both in the form of personnel time of experts and funding - are key. The capacity of the Secretariat to organise, fundraise for and to run the process within a given time is also a crucial factor.

Nearly all action planning processes under AEWA require fundraising efforts by the Secretariat. The main costs are linked to the personnel time needed for the actual compilation of the draft Action Plan and to the action planning workshop to which all relevant range states are invited. First steps to establish the action plan development process are therefore to secure sponsors which are typically governments or international conservation organisations as well as a chief compiler/compiling organisation.

In the case of financial support from a government, the Secretariat usually requires a letter from the respective government, with a) a request to the Secretariat to initiate the action-planning process and b) a commitment to fund the process (i.e. provide resources for the drafting of the plan and for the action-planning workshop as well as for possible printing/translation of the plan if desired). Depending on the type of arrangement with the compiler (hired consultant or pro-bono) the Secretariat signs a contract or more informal agreement outlining the work to be delivered as well as the timeframe.

The Secretariat also informs and liaises with possible other relevant multi-lateral agreements and other legal frameworks on the development of new Action Plans under the AEWA process, such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Bern Convention and the European Commission.

COMPILER STEP 1: Discussions between the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and potential organisations/lead experts to assess their willingness/availability to act as lead compiler for a prioritised Action Plan. Contract or more informal agreement signed depending on arrangement.

1.2.2. Action-planning Workshops

A crucial component in ensuring the early involvement of all range states and possible other relevant stakeholders in any action-planning process, is the organisation of an inter-governmental workshop.

Once a lead compiler/compiling organisation as well as sufficient funding have been secured the Secretariat therefore convenes a planning workshop to which all Principal Range States (regardless of whether they are a Contracting Party to AEWA or not) as well as possible additional international experts for the species are invited. A letter is sent to the respective AEWA Focal Points and Contact Points inviting them to send one government representative charged with the implementation of AEWA as well as one national expert on the species in question to the workshop. This allows for national policy considerations as well as biological, conservation and sustainable use aspects to be reflected in the Plan at an early stage. The active involvement of range state governments is particularly important, as they will be responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan after adoption.

Based on contacts provided by the lead compiler/compiling organisation, the Secretariat may recommend the attendance of a known national species expert in the workshop invitation letter. This, however, is merely a recommendation and the final decision on who participates in the workshop lies with the respective government. In addition, invitations are sent to the organisations represented in the AEWA Technical Committee.

The agenda for the workshops is prepared by the Secretariat, the lead compiler and the host government, if applicable. If capacity allows, a biological assessment as well as an initial threat assessment are also prepared before the workshop. The facilitation of the workshop is carried out by the Secretariat and/or another international expert of species action-planning in cooperation with the lead compiler. Workshops may include an introductory presentation on the international status of the species followed by brief presentations by the national representatives on the current status, main threats, and/or use of the species in their country. This is usually followed by a session on the validation of the biological assessment and problem analysis and discussions of the framework for action (objectives, results and activities with their associated indicators as well as knowledge gaps). Discussions are also held on possible urgent activities that may need to be implemented immediately before a formal adoption of the Plan.

It should be noted that Species Action Plans are international frameworks for the coordinated conservation of species/populations – not scientific papers for peer-review. Although Action Plans should include the best scientific knowledge available at the time of development, gaps in scientific knowledge should not be seen as a reason for delaying the development and subsequent adoption of a Plan. Instead, such knowledge gaps and assumptions made in the absence of hard data should be duly noted in the Plan and activities to close such gaps in cooperation amongst all relevant range states should be added.

COMPILER - STEP 2: Provide the Secretariat with a list of known species experts (name, affiliation, email address) from each Principle Range State, to be included in the workshop invitations.

COMPILER - STEP 3: Undertake, before the workshop, desk research and data collation of the latest available information relevant for the Annexes 1-4 (biological assessment, problem analysis, demographic analysis and predictions, population estimates) of the Plan (as appropriate). Consider the need to develop and disseminate a questionnaire to all Principle Range States (via the Secretariat) to gather more information, for example on national status and trends as well as drivers of decline.

COMPILER STEP 4: Produce, before the workshop, the draft biological assessment, demographic analysis and problem analysis. Send drafts to all invited workshop participants. This information should include the draft texts for the Annexes, draft problem tree and supporting information (e.g. a population viability analysis).

COMPILER STEP 5: Carry out the action-planning workshop in cooperation with the Secretariat and possible other partners covering: a review of the collected data and draft texts; a validation of the problem analysis; agreement on the geographic scope as well as the goal, purpose, objectives, results, actions and corresponding timelines and responsibilities.

1.2.3. Consultations of the draft Action Plan

After the action-planning workshop the lead compiler has the task of drafting the Action Plan based on the workshop outcomes in cooperation with the Secretariat. Depending on the time available, this usually takes between two and four months. This first draft is then circulated to the workshop participants as well as those government representatives and national experts that were invited but not able to attend. This first consultation round is meant to ensure that all the necessary substantive details as well as actions for the species are reflected as discussed at the workshop. Following the feedback from the workshop participants, the lead compiler prepares a new draft which is submitted to the AEWA Technical Committee for comments by the Secretariat.

A revised draft is then again prepared by the lead compiler and submitted by the Secretariat to all Focal Points and Contact Points in the relevant Range States for official government consultation. The timeframe for the official consultation is ideally three months. Within the framework of the official consultation the Focal Points and Contact Points are expected to circulate the draft to all relevant national bodies and stakeholders for comments in accordance with their respective established national procedures and to submit the consolidated national comments to the Secretariat by the given deadline. If no comments are submitted by the deadline, the Secretariat assumes that Range States are in agreement with the Plan. Possible extensions of the deadline for submitting national comments can be requested of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is responsible for the overall final editing (both language and layout) of the draft plan. In order to avoid unnecessary delays throughout the drafting process, this task is usually carried out towards the end of the consultation process.

COMPILER STEP 6: Prepare first draft of the Action Plan in consultation with Secretariat and send out for consultation to workshop invitees.

COMPILER- STEP 7: Incorporate comments from consultation, produce a second draft and provide to the Secretariat for submission to the AEWA Technical Committee.

COMPILER STEP- 8: Incorporate comments from AEWA Technical Committee and provide a third draft to the Secretariat for the official consultation with the Range State governments.

1.2.4. Review by the AEWA bodies and adoption

Following the formal national consultation, a final draft is prepared and submitted to the Technical Committee and, following their consent, to the Standing Committee for approval for submission to the next Meeting of the Parties. Following the positive recommendations from both the Technical and the Standing Committee, the Meeting of the Parties is then requested to adopt the Plan at its next session.

Following the adoption of new Action and Management Plans by the Meeting of the Parties, the Secretariat prepares final versions of the Plans, and makes them available on the AEWA website. Only Plans for which additional funding has been made available are printed. Once Plans are available in their final form the Secretariat informs all Focal Points and Contact Points in the relevant range states.

In some cases, Action Plans may be ready for approval between Sessions of the Meetings of the Parties. MOP3 gave the Standing Committee the mandate to approve Action Plans on an interim basis in Resolution 3.12. Following approval by the Standing Committee on an interim basis, range states can already start implementing the approved Plan inter-sessionally, and do not have to wait for the final adoption by the Meeting of the Parties.

COMPILER STEP - 9: Incorporate comments from the official Range State consultation and submit the draft Plan – through the Secretariat - for official endorsement by the AEWA Technical and Standing Committees and subsequent adoption by the AEWA Meeting of the Parties.

Table 1: The various main steps of the AEWA Action/Management Planning Process. Note that no action-planning process is the same and that both the facilitation and the timetable may be adapted by the Secretariat depending, in particular, on the resources available as well as the meeting schedules of the AEWA governing bodies.

Action/Management Planning Process under AEWA	
STEPS	LEAD & MAIN PLAYERS
Prioritisation of species in urgent need of coordinated international conservation efforts	AEWA Technical Committee
Start and facilitation of the action process (i.e. identifying a lead compiler or drafting team; sourcing funding for compilation and workshop etc.)	AEWA Secretariat
Inter-governmental workshop for all range states and relevant stakeholders	AEWA Secretariat together with lead compiler/drafting team and possible host government, National Focal points and Contact Points
Workshop participants provide comments on 1 st draft	Lead compiler, AEWA Secretariat, workshop participants
AEWA Technical Committee provides technical evaluation/clearance on 2 nd draft	Lead compiler, AEWA Secretariat, AEWA Technical Committee
Formal government consultation of 3 rd draft with all species range states	Lead compiler, AEWA Secretariat, National Focal Points and Contact Points
4 th draft is submitted to the AEWA Technical Committee for sign-off before approval by the Parties	AEWA Technical Committee
Final draft is submitted to the AEWA Standing Committee for preliminary approval OR approval for submission to the Meeting of the Parties	AEWA Standing Committee
Final consulted draft is adopted at the next Session of the Meeting of the Parties	Meeting of the Parties
Final Action/Management Plan is prepared by the Secretariat together with the chief compiler and posted online (printed only if funding is available). Link to (or copy of) the plan is	AEWA Secretariat

sent to all Focal Points and Contact points in the relevant range states with the invitation to implement the plan.	
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2. Action Plan Format - *Guidance*

2.1. Introduction

This section provides additional instructions and guidance directed particularly at compilers or drafting teams on the use of the AEWA International Species Action Plan Format outlined above in section A. Wherever possible, concrete wording samples are also provided as further guidance, but it should be noted that these merely serve as examples to illustrate the logical linkages between the various parts of the format and are not necessarily meant to be transposed verbatim into each AEWA Action Plan.

2.2. Front Cover

Apply format as outlined above on page 3.

2.3. Inside Front Cover

Apply format as outlined above on page 3.

- The **lifespan** of the Action Plan is generally set at 10 years from the date of its adoption. The rationale behind this time-span is pragmatic. Official adoption and endorsement of Action Plans often takes from several months to more than a year, and the implementation of some measures may require even longer periods (*e.g.* legislation and policy changes, implementation of large projects such as LIFE in the EU, etc). Experience shows that there have been difficulties in keeping up to date with monitoring and revision of Action Plans as their number increases. There is also a trade-off between the time and effort needed to update the plans and that needed to implement them. Therefore, a longer period than the initially intended 3-5 years is deemed necessary.
- **Milestones in the production** of the Plan shall include details of any workshops held, dates of each draft, dates of approval by the AEWA Technical Committee, notes on special opinions or dissent from Contracting Parties, date of adoption by AEWA MOP as well as any additional international Agreements or Conventions, if applicable.

2.4. Introduction

Include one short paragraph outlining the justification for the Species Action Plan in question (max 3-4 sentences). This should, for example, reference the triannual process run by the AEWA Technical Committee on the basis of which the species/populations in question has/have been prioritised for action-planning. Reference could also be made to the conservation status and trend of the species/population in question as well as to the most urgent threats identified during the action-planning process.

2.5. Basic Data

Apply format as outlined above on page 4, limit to maximum 1-2 pages.

- **Guidance regarding the definition of Range States in Action Plans and subsequent obligations of AEWA Contracting Parties:**

Each Contracting Party to AEWA is equally responsible under the Agreement for all the AEWA species/populations they host as per the obligations set out in the AEWA legal text. All the countries which host a specific species (whether in small or large numbers) are considered **Range States** for that species.

The identification of **Principle Range States** in AEWA Action Plans, is an approach used to prioritise coordinated international conservation efforts to those countries considered to be crucial for ensuring the favourable conservation status of the species/population in question. Various approaches are used in the existing AEWA Action Plans to determine the geographic scope and the Principal Range States which carry the major responsibility for the implementation of the respective plans. Principle Range States are the countries that will be invited to participate in inter-governmental AEWA International Species Working and Expert Groups to coordinate implementation following the adoption of Action Plans and will also be requested to report specifically on progress made on Action Plan implementation.

An initial assessment of the Principle Range States for a new species for which an Action Plan is being prepared, is carried out by the Lead Compiler in the very beginning of the action-planning process together with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and supported by the Technical Committee, as necessary.

It should be noted that, under no circumstances does the identification of Principle Range States in AEWA International Species Action Plans, diminish the legal obligations of potential remaining Range States which are Contracting Parties to AEWA to equally ensure the adequate protection and conservation of the species/populations in question, including through implementation of relevant actions from the respective Species Action Plan.

- **Guidance on defining the Action Plan Spatial Scope for Species with a Wide Geographical Range:**

As recognised by the AEWA Technical Committee, for Action Plans covering species populations with a wide geographic distribution, relatively high numbers and/or different sub-species, a more differentiated approach may be necessary, in order to limit the scope of the plan so that urgent activities for implementation remain focused on the most important Range States.

In such Plans, **Principal Range States** are defined as Range States which regularly support a set percentage (between 1 and 5% of the biogeographic population) breeding and/or non-breeding numbers of the species/subspecies and ideally not exceeding 20 countries.

In addition to the Principle Range States, two additional Range State categories are suggested to be introduced to such Action Plans, as necessary:

- **Survey Range States**

Survey Range States are defined as known Range States as well as potential Range States hosting breeding and/or non-breeding numbers below 1% of the biogeographic population threshold as identified during the action-planning process;

- **Consultation Range States**

Range States which host breeding and/or non-breeding numbers below the set percentage threshold (between 1 and 5% of the biogeographic population). Following consultation, these Range States may choose to be considered as a Principal Range State in the context of ISSAP implementation.

The guidance approved by the Technical Committee at its 12th Meeting in March 2015 with respect to the definition of Range States in Action Plans, was presented to the 6th Session of the Meeting of the AEWPA Parties in 2015 for information in document AEWPA/MOP6.33 [“Criteria for Prioritising AEWPA Populations for Action and Management Planning and for the Revision and Retirement of Action Plans as well as Guidance on the Definition of Principal Range States in Action Plans”](#).

- Table 2: European Union Member States shall use the data from the latest Article 12 reporting.

2.6. Framework for Action

2.6.1. Introduction

This is the core part of the plan – it spells out its goal, purpose, favourable reference values, objectives, results and actions. The goal, purpose, favourable reference values and objectives **set the biological targets for the population**. The results correspond to those factors which need to be in place in order to address the problems and improve the situation. The actions necessary to achieve these results, along with their priority ratings, timescales and implementing organisations are also presented here.

The objectives, result, actions, priorities, timescales and implementing organisations should be included in Table 3. Under each action, the Range States for which implementation is relevant should be listed (using [ISO codes](#) for short).

Standardisation of terminology is necessary in order to maintain coherence between different plans and to help implementation, evaluation and revision. The following terminology is considered to be the most appropriate for the Plans covered by this Format and ensuing Guidance.

2.6.2. Goal

- This is the **overall long-term aim** to which the Plan will contribute but will not achieve within its time-span.
- In cases of **Species Action Plans** the following goal can be used:
 - *“restore the species/population to Favourable Conservation Status”*.
- **Indicators and methods of verification for the goal:** The favourable reference values (see 2.6.4. below), which are to be established for each population, will provide the framework for the assessment whether a population is in a favourable conservation status.

2.6.3. Purpose

- This is **what the plan aims to achieve by the end of its validity**. It is very important to define the purpose **realistically** taking into account what will happen to the population before actions are implemented and how long it takes that the measures take effect. Document the models and assumptions in Annex 3.
- **Indicators for the purpose and methods of verification:** The purpose should be expressed in terms of one or more measurable attributes (e.g. population size, growth rate, range extent) and include some time by which it should be achieved as well as what the methods of verification will be. Ideally, use the same indicators (i.e. the FRVs) as for the goal but with target values that can be realistically achieved by the end of the validity of the plan.

2.6.4. Favourable Reference Values

- Establishing favourable reference values for each population covered by the Action Plan, as well as for the management units thereof (if applicable), is a crucial step as it provides the reference for assessing whether a population is in a favourable conservation status as per the legal requirements of AEWA. Numerical target thresholds will also allow for better monitoring of progress towards the Action Plan goal.
- The approach for establishing the favourable reference values will need to be agreed amongst the respective Range States for each population, as it will vary depending on the distribution of the population during its annual cycle and the data available for the species. Favourable reference values for AEWA-listed populations will be established in accordance with the CMS definition of Favourable Conservation Status which has four criteria (population dynamic, range, habitat and historical levels) and the population is considered to be in unfavourable status if it does not meet any of the criteria or its future prospects are negative. More detailed guidance on the interpretation and establishment of favourable reference values is under development by the AEWA Technical Committee building on existing work under other relevant international frameworks⁶.
- Establishing favourable reference values for migratory waterbird populations is time consuming and it usually requires the establishment of national favourable reference values by Range States (at least by the identified Principle Range States). It may not be possible to be carried out within the regular action-planning process itself. If this is the case, the standard text providing the mandate to establish favourable reference values should be included in the Action Plan as per the format above. Note that management units will most likely only be established for populations subject to Adaptive Harvest Management Programmes. The reference to management units can therefore be omitted for populations which are not foreseen to be subject to adaptive harvest management.
- Ideally, however, the favourable reference values should be established before the adoption of the Action Plan whereby these could be included directly into the Plan itself already during the drafting phase, directly under the Action Plan Goal and Purpose.

⁶ In the interim, Action Plan compilers are advised to follow the key concepts and approaches presented in the explanatory notes and guidelines under the EU Habitats Directive Article 17. [DG Environment. \(2017\). Reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive: Explanatory notes and guidelines for the period 2013-2018. Brussels: European Commission](#)

2.6.5. Objectives

- As **Plans aim to restore populations to a more favourable conservation status**, objectives relate to direct threats that drive the population decline. The objectives should express a reduction in the impact of the threat.
- Objectives can also be planned for addressing important organisational or research issues.
- Objectives should be **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

2.6.6. Results

- Results are the underlying conditions that need to be achieved, in order to accomplish each objective.
- Results are the direct consequences of successfully implemented actions.
- Results should address each important drivers of the threat identified in the problem analysis.
- To avoid poorly focused plans, it is recommended to limit the number of results to 3 – 6 per objective.
- Results should be ranked to follow a descending order of priority within each objective, which should reflect the importance of the threat they are addressing.

2.6.7. Actions

- Actions are implemented, in order to achieve the results. Justification for each action should be self-evident from the way it is formulated.
- As with threats, a priority for each action should be stated (Essential, High, Medium, Low), using an agreed priority ranking process and the results of the action-planning workshop.
- Deciding on the priority order of actions: To avoid overloading stakeholders with a large number of actions, the Action Plan should include actions that are **necessary to achieve the related result** and that are **technically, socially and financially feasible**. Proposed actions should be assessed for feasibility and prioritised at the planning workshop based on their expected contribution to the recovery of the population. Activities with limited contribution to the recovery of the population or low feasibility should be not included into the plan.
- **Time scales** should be attached to each Action using the following scale:
 - Immediate launched within the next year.
 - Short: launched within the next 3 years.
 - Medium: launched within the next 5 years.
 - Long: launched within the next >5 years.
 - Ongoing: currently being implemented and should continue
 - Rolling to be implemented perpetually (any action above from immediate to ongoing can be also qualified as rolling)

EXAMPLE Table 1. *Example actions corresponding to the objective and result, ranked according to their importance, following the problem tree.*

Objective 1: Negative population trend reversed to positive.				
Result	Action	Priority	Time scale	Organisations responsible

1.1. Mortality of chicks in the breeding areas is reduced by 20%.	1.1.1. Advertise widely actions to reduce clutch and chick mortality to farmers/ land-users, in protected areas as a first step. Applicable to: AU, HU, CZ, SK	High	Short/ rolling	Research institutes and governmental agencies developing agri-environmental measures
	1.1.2. Introduce system to manage grazing pressure in protected areas within tolerance limits of species (1,5 LU/ha) Applicable to: AU, HU, CZ, SK	Medium	Medium	Managers of Protected Areas
	1.1.3. Support favourable habitat management in breeding areas through agri-environmental schemes. Applicable to: All countries with breeding populations	Low	Medium/ rolling	Ministries of Agriculture and Environment

2.7. Annex 1: Biological Assessment

As mentioned above within the Format, this Annex should be kept to **1-2 pages**, excluding the national population estimates provided in Table 2.

2.7.1. *Distribution throughout the annual cycle*

- Very brief description and map of distribution and movements, including info on timing and location of breeding, spring migration and moulting etc.

2.7.2. *Habitat requirements*

- Very brief description of the habitat used by the species during breeding (including nest site) and non-breeding habitats, feeding habitats and diet.

2.7.3. *Survival and productivity*

- Brief summary of available information on generation length, age of first breeding, clutch size, productivity, survival of the age classes (adult, juvenile, chick, nest) and factors affecting them.

2.7.4. *Population size and trend*

- Ideally for each biogeographic population the current population estimate as well as historical and recent trends in population size and range (breeding, wintering, migration) should be provided.
- National estimates should be provided in Table 2.

2.8. Annex 2: Problem Analysis

2.8.1. Introduction

This section of the International Species Action Plan describes the identified problems (threats) of concern as well as their impact at species/population level.

2.8.2. Problem analysis for Action Plans with a recovery objective

In the case of recovery plans the problem analysis focuses on the **direct threats to the species/population**.

In case of plans for single species, problems should be identified together but evaluated for each population separately. In case of multi-species plans, problems should be assessed for each species separately and summarised.

Threats should be listed if they are known (or have the realistic potential) to cause population decline. Only those threats for which specific actions will be developed should be described in the Action Plan. Threats of a more global character (e.g. climate change, avian influenza and others) - if important - should be mentioned in the threats overview paragraph. However, the Action Plan itself has a limited role to play in addressing such large-scale environmental changes and usually it is not practical to include general policy actions into the Plans.

The identified threats should be presented in descending order of priority according to their impact on the population. Hence, their listing in the Plan is a result of the threat prioritisation process which took part during the development of the Action Plan - especially during the action-planning workshop.

2.8.3. Developing the assessment of threats

A preliminary **problem analysis**, including the development of a preliminary **problem tree** should be compiled prior to the action-planning workshop by the Action Plan compiler. As described above under the AEWA action-planning process, this initial assessment should be based on current knowledge collected from literature, (possible) national questionnaires sent to the Range States as well as additional expert input where available.

At the workshop, the identified problems should be validated, their impact should be assessed, and the causes of the most important problems should be defined using a **participatory problem-tree analysis** that will focus the Action Plan on tackling the main threats, as applicable.

Common sense and best available information should guide the decision-making process when ranking threats. Ideally, **threats** should be ranked using a quantitative system describing the scope, severity and timing of the threat following the IUCN (Red Lists) Threats Classification Scheme. These assessments should be based on best available data and expert judgement. Ensuring that the ranking is consistent and correct in relative terms is the most important point.

It should not be forgotten that threats often act in a synergistic way and may have a cumulative effect (e.g. mortality caused by by-catch and hunting might have a low impact on their own, but their cumulative impact may add up). The Plan should specifically highlight cases of cumulative impact.

If gaps in knowledge are likely to affect the understanding of the impact of threats, these should be reflected as research actions and the results of the research should be incorporated when revisions of the Plan are made. A measure of the level of uncertainty involved with each threat should be indicated in its description.

2.8.4. Developing the Problem Tree

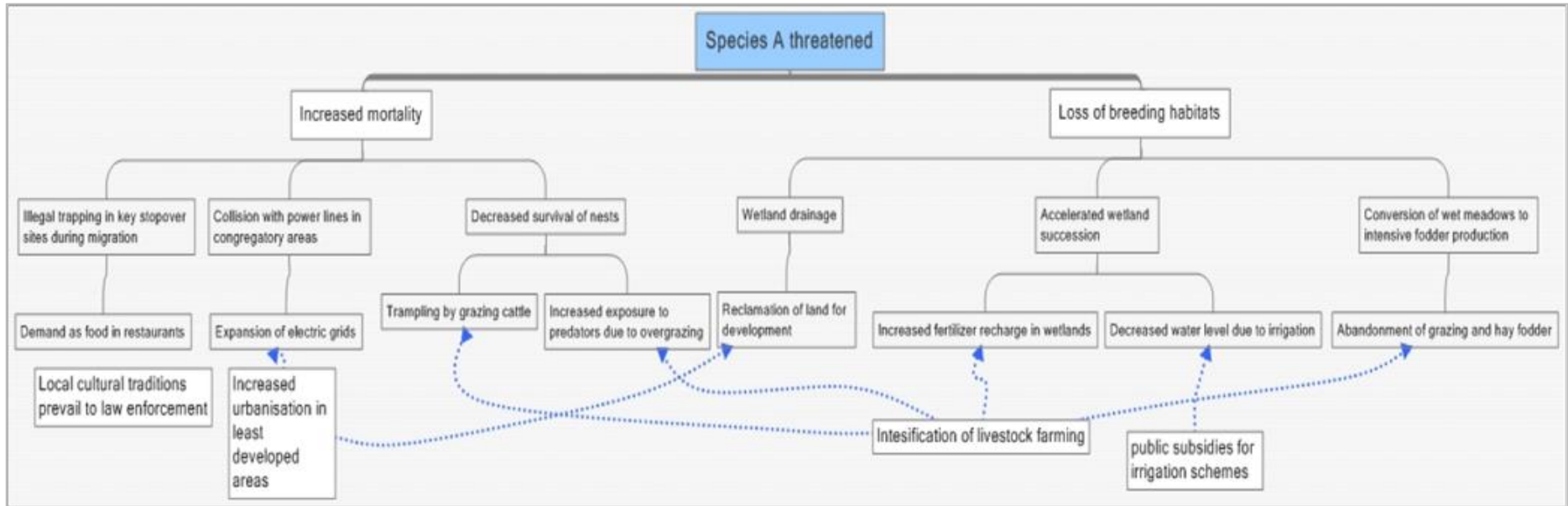
The problem tree helps to explain how threats affect the population and how they are related to their root causes. The tree is built using the cause-effect relationships of threats and their impacts. The workshop participants should review and confirm the draft problem analysis to make sure it reflects the common understanding on the range and importance of threats by the relevant experts. The box below provides a generalised example of a problem tree.

The Action Plan workshop discussions on the draft problem tree aim to reveal the key threats affecting the species. It is a useful approach to start from identifying the demographic parameters, such as increased mortality rates amongst adults and/or young, reduced productivity or low recruitment of immature individuals, that drive the decline of the population. Then identify what are the direct causes of the deviations (e.g. poaching, by-catch, increased predation, farming operations etc.). Once the direct causes are identified, it is important to understand why the impact of the direct causes has increased, what motivates the stakeholders etc.

Some root causes such as policy issues are complex and indirect. Therefore, compilers should encourage the use of relevant policy specialists (such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry or rural development experts etc.) in the problem analysis.

The final problem tree should be included as Figure 2 in the Action or Management Plan.

Example: Problem Tree



Level 1: Stress through which the threats operate (increased mortality etc.)

Level 2: Direct threats (illegal trapping)

Level 3: Immediate causes of threats (demand as food in restaurants)

Level 4: Root causes of threats (local cultural traditions prevail over law enforcement)

2.9. Annex 3 - Justification of Conservation/Management Objectives

2.9.1. Introduction

The ultimate measure of success for International Species Action Plans is whether they have delivered the changes in the status of the species or populations they promised. Plans can fail to deliver the expected results because of:

- Inadequate execution of the Plan;
- Faulty intervention logic;
- Unrealistic assumptions concerning the impact of the actions;
- Unclear objectives, and,
- Lack of adequate follow-up monitoring.

In order to improve the development and particularly the subsequent implementation of International Species Action Plans it is therefore suggested to develop and include various scenarios and assess their likely impact using population viability analysis in Annex 3. of the Action and Management Plans.

2.9.2. Scenarios predicting population changes

Presenting a **'business-as-usual' scenario** is important because this presents how the population would change in the absence of the foreseen conservation or management actions. This can demonstrate how the conservation status of a declining species is likely to deteriorate in the future and how that may affect its use, if there is any. This can emphasise the urgency of implementing the Plan and this can be used effectively to inform donors and other decision-makers. This can be produced before the workshop.

Developing an **'implementation' scenario** helps to establish realistic conservation targets both in terms of population parameters and in terms of the scale of intervention needed to achieve the desired future state of the population. During the planning phase, different scenarios can be used to assess the (cost-)effectiveness of different conservation scenarios and help choosing the most effective conservation strategy. This can be produced during or after the workshop and should inform the indicators for the goals and purpose.

2.9.3. Population Viability Analysis (PVA)

A PVA can be very helpful in assessing the demographic impact of threats and problems as well as conservation actions. They can be used to quantify assumptions and their impact on the future of the populations concerned.

- If a PVA is to be used, it should be obtained from a relevant scientific source and ideally developed for the species/population prior to the action-planning workshop.
- The simplest PVA sufficient for the problem in question should be used.
- A PVA can also highlight knowledge gaps about the population parameters or species biology that can be further researched/monitored.

2.10. Annex 4: References

The reference list, in alphabetical order following the format given below, should contain only the key documents referred to in the International Species Action Plan text, not general literature on the species. Titles of journals should be given in full.

Ideally, information from peer-reviewed sources should be preferred over “grey literature” and personal contributions or comments. This will enhance the credibility and objectivity of the Action Plan.

However, not all information needed for Action Plans is officially published. In such cases compilers should judge the available information carefully and responsibly and clearly indicate that the sources used are such in the Action Plan text itself. Much valuable information is, for example, now available through the National Reports provided by Range States to meetings of the various AEWA International Single Species Working Groups.

Information stored in institutional databases should also be included in the list of references, with indication of the source and date of access to the database.

Example:

Aunins, A. 2001a. Changes of lekking activity of Great Snipe during course of night and season in Latvia: recommendations for methods of searching for Great snipe leks and estimating lek size. *Putni daba Supplement* 1: 13 – 26.

Aunins, A. 2001b. Territorial distribution, numbers and habitat selection of Great Snipe in Latvia: historical information and the current situation (1999 - 2001). *Putni daba Supplement* 1: 4 - 12.

BirdLife International. 2000. *Threatened Birds of the World*. Spain and Cambridge, U.K.

Devort, M. 2000. Some methodological aspects of snipe research: The contribution of long-term wing collection and analysis of Common snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), Jack snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*) and Great snipe (*Gallinago media*) to the monitoring of their populations. *OMPO Newsletter* No 21: 5 – 24.

Garvis, G. 2000. The National Action Plan for the Great Snipe (*Gallinago media*) conservation in Ukraine. In: The National Action Plans for the Globally threatened bird species. Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds (USPB). SoftArt Press, Kyiv. pp. 180-189. (in Ukrainian).