

Danube Sturgeon Task Force Activities and Future Vision

EUSDR PA 4 meeting

»From Iron Gates to Gabčíkovo Water Structure «

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Bratislava, Slovak Republic

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Current Status

- 6 indigenous Danube sturgeon species
- 2 species are locally extinct
- 3 (anadromous) species are classified “critically endangered” and only present downstream of Iron Gate – deterioration continues
- 1 potamodromous species classified as “endangered” - deterioration cont.
- Adopted instruments relevant for sturgeon:
 - EU Habitats Directive: good conservation status
 - EU Water Framework Directive: Good Ecological Status
 - Bern Convention: Pan-European Action Plan
 - EUSDR PA6 and PA4: migratory fish conservation targets
 - ICPDR: sturgeon strategy

WHO ARE WE AN WHAT DO WE DO?

- We are a multistakeholder platform under EUSDR PA6 (water/nature managers, academia, civil society)
- We don't manage projects
- We ensure exchange of information and experience
- But we identify knowledge and governance gaps and potential synergies, and entice others to fill and/or exploit them
- We stimulate cooperation between different actors from different sectors and governance levels

With whom do we work and talk?

- EUSDR
- ICPDR
- Inland fisheries authorities
- FAO/GFCM
- European Commission
- National and regional water and nature authorities

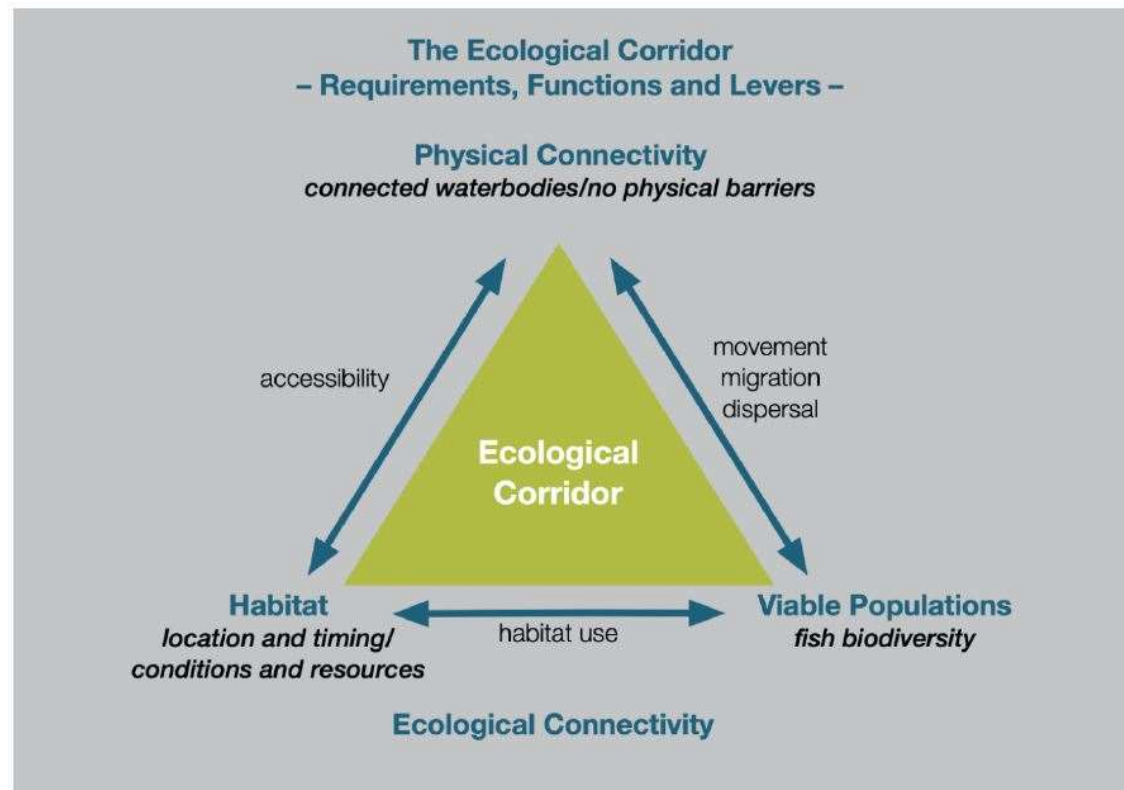
Examples of Ongoing Projects with DSTF involvement/Why?

- GFCM Black Sea bycatch Pilot Project - catch in the wild/Black Sea integration
- We Pass 2 Project (Iron Gate fish passage) – migration corridor
- Blue Corridor (failed to attract funding) – migration corridor
- LIFEBoat 4 Sturgeons – monitoring, stock replenishing
- SCUTE – basin overview, monitoring guidelines
- Anadrom – monitoring, stock replenishing
- Diverse RTD projects

Upcoming project:

- **EU Horizon Mission Oceans and Rivers** : Danube river basin lighthouse – Protection and restoration of migratory fish habitats (2 projects, ± 15 M€)

MAKING THE ECO-SYSTEM FUNCTION



DSTF Main Priorities

- Preventing catch in the wild
- Ensuring integrity of migration corridors (continuity/connectivity and habitats)
- Preventing further collapse of populations through life support (ex-situ conservation/restocking)
- Monitoring of populations/habitats

Poaching and bycatch : a threat to recovery in LDR

- Legal framework (fishing bans and bycatch reporting obligations) largely in place.
- But no official data collection and no exchange of information between countries who share populations
- Enforcement of existing regulations needs further attention.
- WWF annually compiles authority data from BG , RO and UA including seizures of illegal gear and poached or illegally traded sturgeons
[Latest report](#)
- The extent of the bycatch issue in Danube and Black Sea fisheries is currently explored by a GFCM pilot project
- Every case affects shared populations!



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Continuity/Physical Connectivity

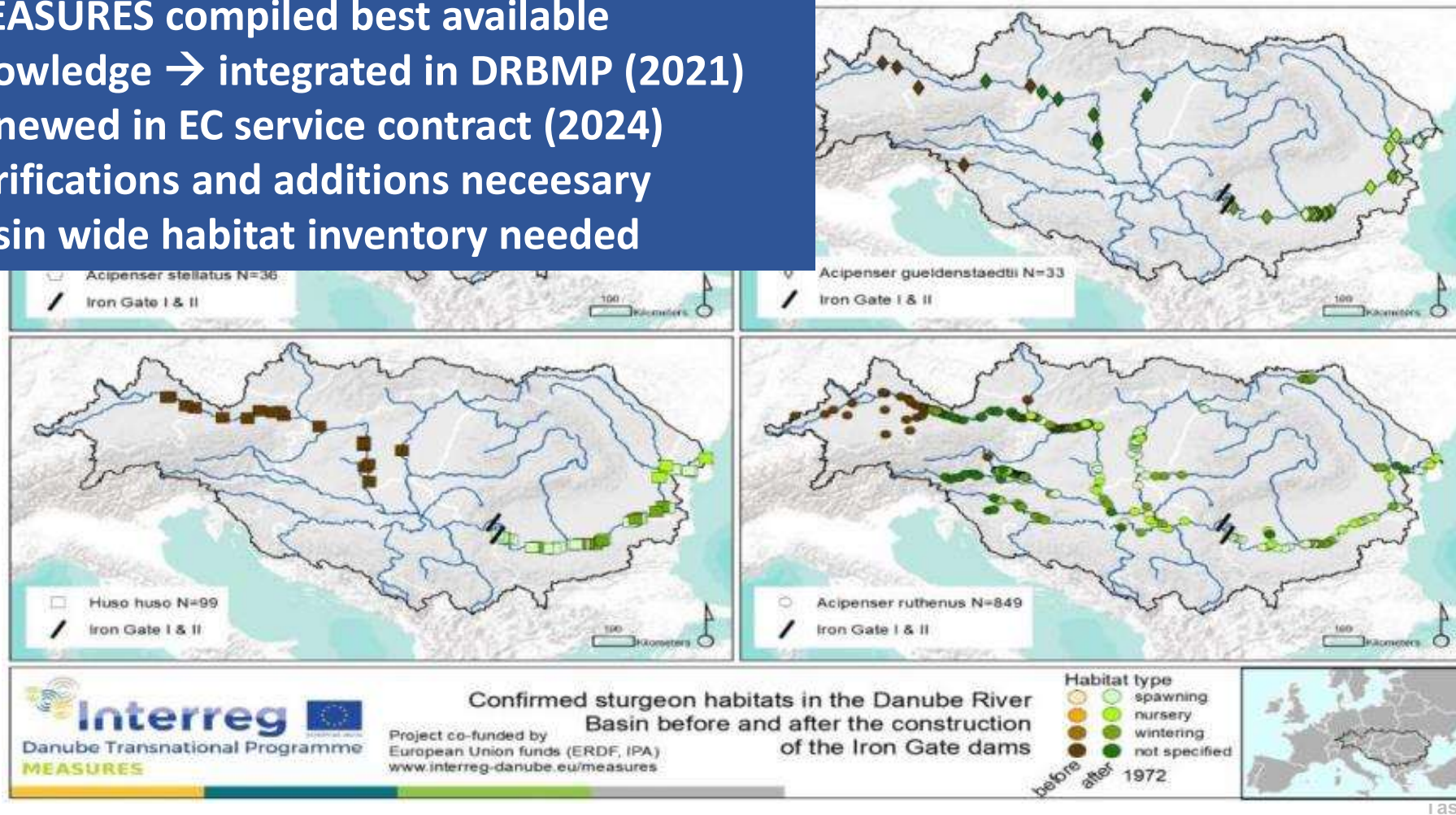


Iron Gates (RO/RS) – passage solution would double the available river stretch; Addressed by WePass projects through monitoring studies, modelling and technical design variants

Gabčíkovo & Čunovo (SK) - passage solutions addressed by Living Rivers project

Habitats

- MEASURES compiled best available knowledge → integrated in DRBMP (2021)
- Renewed in EC service contract (2024)
- Verifications and additions necessary
- Basin wide habitat inventory needed



EX-SITU CONSERVATION/RE-STOCKING LIFEBoat 4 Sturgeon project



Major Governance Issues for Sturgeon Conservation

- Competences fragmented across levels of governance and between different sector authorities
- Lack of national political ownership of internationally agreed basin-wide nature protection targets
 - making them a priority
- Lack of effective embedding in nationally managed EU funds
- Lack of binding transboundary cooperation framework for nature protection
- Lack of Effective Black Sea sturgeon protection framework
- Lack of basin-wide exchange and sharing of information

5 Main Gabčíkovo/Čunovo (and Iron Gate) Challenges

- Developing workable passage solution designs for the 4 surviving Danube sturgeon species at the Gabčíkovo water structures
- Transforming Danube Ministerial commitments into political priorities at national level
- Cooperation across levels of governance to ensure availability of finance
- Cooperation across levels of governance to ensure priority for financing fish passage solutions
- Implementing basin-wide monitoring and technical solutions allowing for optimisation of fish passage efficiency in follow-up

Thank you for your attention !

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