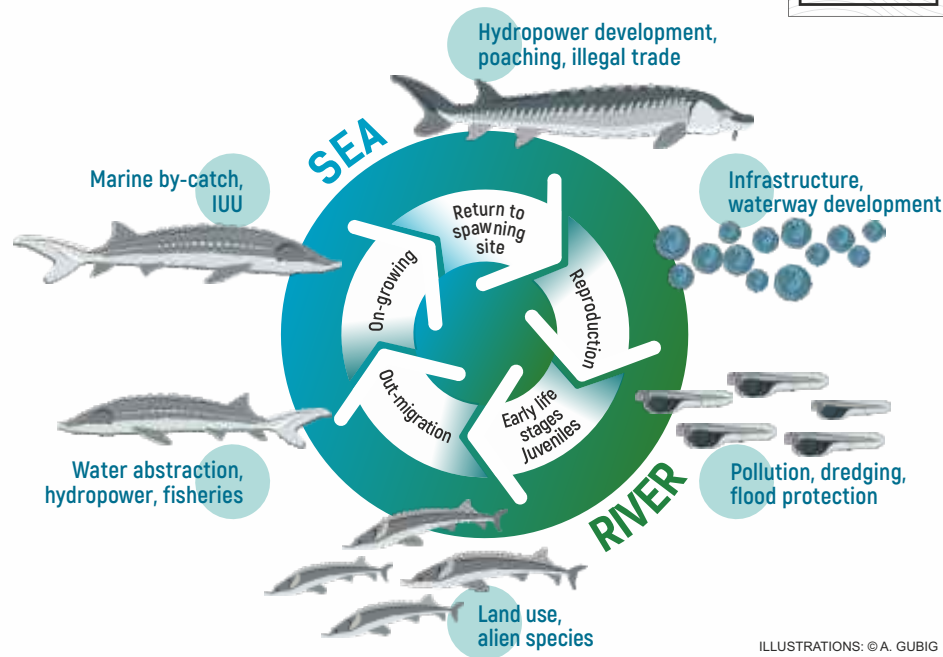


# STURGEON LIFE-CYCLE

A typical life-cycle of migrating sturgeons showing adverse impacts on the various life phases. Today, illegal fishing, bycatch, blockage of migration routes and degradation of habitats must be considered as the main factors for continued decline.



ILLUSTRATIONS: © A. GUBIG



WWF & WSCS · SAVING EUROPE'S STURGEONS

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# SAVING EUROPE'S STURGEONS

Due to overharvest and habitat loss, sturgeons are considered the most endangered group of species on earth! Eight species of sturgeon exist on the European continent and their status is highly critical. The Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons\* provides a framework for urgently needed recovery measures. Sturgeons need to migrate between rivers and seas and are crossing many national borders during their lives, therefore they represent a flagship species for free flowing rivers and healthy, marine ecosystems. Sturgeon recovery cannot be achieved by single countries but it is a true European responsibility.



**It is time for action! Otherwise Europe will lose the species forever.**

**What needs to be done: INCREASE support from actors and stakeholders!**

Successful implementation of this Action Plan will not only save the eight species from extinction in Europe but especially the habitat-related measures will help to safeguard other aquatic life too. Thus the Plan contributes to the implementation of international conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, Bern, Bonn or Ramsar Convention and EU Directives such as the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive or Marine Framework Directive.



**A matter of urgency: Eight species of sturgeon are found in Europe, of these 7 are currently considered as critically endangered by IUCN, representing the highest threat category before a species is considered as extinct in the wild. The clock is ticking!**



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## CONTACTS:

**Jörn Gessner, WSCS**  
sturgeon@igb-berlin.de

**Beate Striebel, WWF**  
bstriebe@wwfcee.org

- 1 Urgently stop the decline of remaining populations!**
  - By prohibiting sturgeon fishing and stopping poaching
  - By reducing bycatch in marine and freshwater
- 2 Actively safeguard and support populations through *ex situ* programmes!**
  - By establishing captive *ex situ* stocks to secure genetic diversity
  - By implementing scientifically monitored reproduction and release programmes
  - By ensuring regional coherence of these programmes across river and marine basins
- 3 Identify, protect and restore sturgeon habitats!**
  - By identifying existing critical habitats and ensuring legal protection
  - By assessing habitat restoration options and implementing pilot actions
- 4 Secure or facilitate sturgeon migration!**
  - By avoiding the building of further migration obstacles in key rivers
  - By identifying existing obstacles and establish passage solutions
- 5 Ensure monitoring of sturgeon populations through scientifically designed programmes!**
- 6 Eliminate illegal trade of all sturgeon products!**
  - By increasing enforcement of existing regulations and stronger prosecutions
  - By raising awareness of all actors along the trade chain
- 7 Secure adequate funding and regulations to enable implementation of the Action Plan!**
- 8 Increase support from actors and stakeholders!**
- 9 Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan!**

\* <https://rm.coe.int/pan-european-action-plan-for-sturgeons/16808e84f3>

# STURGEON RECOVERY MEASURES IN EUROPE

Conservation measures are ongoing in many countries but coordination in joint river or sea basins is largely lacking.

## GERMANY

**European sturgeon**  
National Action Plan in place;  
*Ex situ* brood stock established;  
Release programme ongoing in Elbe.

## NETHERLANDS

**European sturgeon**  
National Action Plan in place;  
Reintroduction feasibility and habitat restoration in the Rhine delta ongoing.

## UNITED KINGDOM

**European sturgeon, Baltic sturgeon**  
Species assignment to river systems underway;  
Recovery measures and habitat restoration in Severn or Humber planned.

## FRANCE

**European sturgeon**  
National Action Plan in place;  
*Ex situ* stock established;  
Release programme ongoing in Gironde and tributaries;  
Bycatch assessment ongoing.

## SPAIN

**European sturgeon**  
Recovery planned;  
Experimental release in Ebro;  
Migration facilitation at Xerta dam planned.

## ITALY

**Adriatic sturgeon**  
2 National Action Plans existing - none officially adopted;  
Release activities in Po basin uncoordinated;  
**Beluga** - reintroduction is planned.

## UPPER/MIDDLE DANUBE



**Sterlet** • Danube Action Plan outdated;  
National Action Plans missing (except HU);  
Fishing of sterlet not prohibited in AT, SK, HR;  
*Ex situ* stocks and release programme under development;  
Fish passage at Gabčíkovo dam planned.

## BALTIC SEA



**Baltic Sturgeon**  
HELCOM Regional Action Plan in place;  
*Ex situ* stock established (PL, DE);  
Release programmes ongoing in Oder, Vistula, Nemunas, Venta, Gauja, Narva and planned in Nėva, Volchov, Pärnu and Göta Älv.

## LOWER DANUBE



**Russian sturgeon, stellate, beluga, sterlet**  
Danube Action Plan outdated;  
National Action Plans missing (except UA);  
Release activities uncoordinated;  
Feasibility of fish passage at Iron Gate dams ongoing;  
Improved enforcement against IUU necessary;  
Fishing bans in place (BG in need of prolongation).

## RUSSIA

**Russian sturgeon, stellate, beluga, sterlet**  
Action Plan missing;  
Release programmes ongoing in tributaries to Sea of Azov;  
Improvement of existing fish passage and habitat restoration in Don ongoing;  
Dam removal and migration facilitation on Kuban.

## GEORGIA

**Russian sturgeon, stellate, beluga, ship sturgeon**  
Action plan missing;  
Monitoring of populations under development;  
Habitat protection and restoration in Rioni in planning.

