
Step-by-step approach regarding sturgeon migration in the DRB



Annex 19 of the DRBM Plan



Step-by step approach for sturgeon and other migratory species in the Danube River Basin

The step-by-step approach shown below was agreed upon at the 9th Ordinary Meeting. It describes the vision and required management steps to ensure river and habitat continuity for sturgeon and other migratory species at the basin-wide scale. It serves as the basis for the definition of respective management objectives and the performance/development of the Iron Gates I & II feasibility study. Further details on sturgeons in general, the Action Plan for Conservation of sturgeons in the DRB under the Bern Convention (SAP) and future protection activities in the DRB can be taken from the ICPDR Sturgeon Background Document¹ that has been elaborated by the ICPDR's Sturgeon Task Group.

Step-by-step approach for sturgeon and other migratory species in the DRB

STEP 1 **Sturgeon species:** Performance of a feasibility study on enabling free passage of sturgeon sp. at Iron Gates I & II and habitat restoration in the lower Danube section below the Iron Gate and in relevant tributaries (evaluation of habitat restoration feasibility and effect/performance of habitat restoration measures)¹. The feasibility study should take into account the issue of downstream migration. Both down and upstream migration should also be ensured for other migratory species. The feasibility study requires fieldwork and so will last approx. 3 years. Investigations on potential funding of the study are taking place.

Other migratory species: Investigation of presence/absence of tributaries connectivity to Danube (basin-wide scale) and longitudinal continuity of Danube and respective tributaries (basin-wide approach >4000km²) using other migratory species as indicators. Investigation based on national knowledge and Programmes of Measures.

STEP 2 Based on the outcomes of the feasibility study at the Iron Gates I & II: plan, design and implement passage facilities for Iron Gates I & II.

STEP 3 As soon as the decision is made to assist sturgeon species and other migratory species to bypass the Iron Gate I & II, undertake:

- ⇒ Habitat restoration for sturgeons and other migratory sp. in the middle Danube, upstream of Iron Gates to the Gabčíkovo Dam incl. relevant tributaries (evaluation of restoration effect and feasibility; performance of concrete measures).
- ⇒ Performance of a feasibility study on enabling sturgeon and other migratory species free passage at the Gabčíkovo Dam and habitat restoration in the lower Danube section below the Iron Gate and in relevant tributaries. The feasibility study should take the issue of downstream migration into account.

STEP 4 Based on the outcomes of the feasibility study at Gabčíkovo Dam: plan, design and implement passage facilities at the Gabčíkovo Dam.

STEP 5 Once the decision is made to assist sturgeon species bypass the Gabčíkovo Dam:

- ⇒ Habitat restoration specific for sturgeons in the upper Danube, upstream of the Gabčíkovo Dam to the original sturgeon spawning grounds (evaluation of restoration effect and feasibility; performance of concrete measures).
- ⇒ Feasibility study on sturgeon passage at potentially effected hydropower plants. Consider downstream migration and involve the hydropower stakeholders.

¹ Sturgeon Background Document – Overlaps of the Sturgeon Action Plan and the DRBM Plan. ICPDR Document IC WD 264, 2006.

¹ Considering the fact that most Danube sturgeon species are very close to extinction, the Sturgeon Task Group recommends an immediate implementation of measures in Step 1. This would significantly support the Romanian government which has, based on the dramatic situation, endorsed a Ministerial Order on “Conservation of Wild Sturgeon Populations and the Development of Sturgeon Aquaculture in Romania” in May 2006.