

SUDOANG

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Promoting sustainable and concerted eel stock management in the SUDOE area

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the document

Given the critical situation of the European eel, in 2007 the EU adopted Council Regulation 1100/2007, which established a legislative framework for its recovery. Despite the good intentions of this regulation, twelve year later (2020), the eel continues to be in a critical situation. The regulatory framework is necessary for the recovery of the European eel, but it seems to fall short.

In fact, Whereas Provision 6 of the Regulation states “The success of measures for the recovery of the European eel stock **depends on close cooperation and coherent action at Community, Member State and local and regional level**, as well as on **information, consultation and involvement of the public sectors involved...**”, which implies that multilevel collaboration between the administrations of the different states, the regional administrations, scientists, the fishing industry and other stakeholders interested in the eel, is a necessary condition to meet the goal of improving the European eel stock.

It is not so much about the good management implemented in one state, but rather the degree and quality of the collaboration between states and the respective stakeholders.

The “**Promoting the Concerted and Sustainable Management of Eels in the SUDOE area**” (Spain, France and Portugal) project (SOE2/P5/E0617), acronym **SUDOANG**, specifically seeks to “Strengthen the cooperation of the stakeholders involved in eel stock management and their habitat in the SUDOE” area, by improving coordination and communication among eel managers at different levels and sectors, and by exploring new management approaches.

This project arose from the need to recover the European eel population (*Anguilla anguilla*), which has declined over the last 50 years and is outside safe biological limits. The population has not recovered despite the Recovery Plan put in place by the EU in 2007. One of the reasons is the lack of common dialogue and strategies among the stakeholders involved (administrations, scientists, managers, the fishing industry, NGOs) and at different levels (local, regional, national). As regards participants from the public administration managing resources and areas of environmental interest, we distinguish between technicians from those making final decisions. Technicians are taken to be those who provide relevant information to the economic, social, environmental, biological, etc. management systems, as is the case of scientists, control forces, etc. Decision-makers and legislators are taken to be those who propose the necessary standards for the sustainable regulation of an environmentally protected resource or area.

Fostering cooperation among the participants in a project implies forging and implementing principles and values associated to the new governance.

The Governance Platform is one of the main deliverables from the execution of the SUDOANG project and its purpose is to improve cooperation and the collaborative work of the main stakeholders with interest in eels, with the common goal of recovering the eel stock.

A platform, just like any other social organisation, is a set of people who share concerns and ideas with respect to a common theme or problem (critical situation of the European eel) and who mobilise to try to solve it or come up with answers aimed at minimising it.

This report, within Activity 8.2. - Future Governance Platform Proposals, describes the basic pillars of the platform, its composition and structure. The composition and structure proposal is the outcome of a study, coordinated by the Lonxanet Foundation, which was conducted by the SUDOANG project members, partners and associates, who have actively participated. In fact, the result to date is thanks to the agreement and consensus reached by them.

Once the project is ended, and in order for the governance project to continue to be active, it is hope that those stakeholders that are most involved in and committed to the eel recovery goals will play a certain leadership role to help the project participants with the greatest commitment to keep and renew their interest in the participation within the governance platform.

2. METHODOLOGY

An approach fostering participation has been applied throughout nearly the whole design and development process of the platform, which began in June 2019. The goal of this approach includes strengthening the legitimacy and internal cohesion of the members taking part in the platform design. Project representatives from different sections of the national and regional administrations, as well as from the fishing industry, NGO, from eel research centres, etc., took part in person in a reasonably active way. A Governance Platform Support Group (GAP) made up of representatives from all the sectors of the three countries was set up in order to closely contribute to preparing the Governance Platform proposal.

The GAP has worked on line by means of exchanging emails and videoconferences with high participation. The majority of the points discussed, which are necessary to lay the foundations of the platform, were agreed by those members and are the outcome of fostering constructive dialogue among all the parties.

Since the very start of the project, the majority of the activities led by the Lonxanet Foundation were planned and implemented in order to foster collaborative engagement among its members. The Dialogue Improvement workshops (A7.2) and the Good Governance seminar (A7.3), conducted in annual meetings, along with the different communications to and surveys of partners and associates, etc., helped to strengthen stakeholder collaboration and for them to work together on the basis of the future Eel Governance Platform.

It also has had to address more delicate topics, such as prejudices. Prejudices act as barriers in the processes where collaboration is needed. This theme has been exclusively addressed from the narrative perspective to ensure that the participants grasp the idea that if we do not reduce those prejudices, which are often difficult to recognise, it would be more complex for the platform to achieve its goals.

3. GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

Any informal or formal organisation, intended to endure in time, must consider what its mission and vision is, along with its goals. The setting up of the platform is the purpose to encourage its members to address a complex problem which is impossible to solve solely from fragmented perspectives (local or national). Collaborative spaces are required for all the stakeholders interested in eel stock recovery. The setting up of the multilevel governance platform (collaborative structuring between international, national and regional administrations) opens up an opportunity for collaboration and joint work between the diversity of stakeholders, regardless of their role, nationality, gender, age, etc.

The Mission of an organisation is what the platform must realistically do to achieve some of its goals in an estimated time period. The Vision is the greatest aspiration of the platform regarding its ultimate goal.

The platform's Mission was agreed in different meetings, conducted with the majority of the participants, and the Vision was also incorporated in the very wording.

Mission/Vision

To contribute to the recovery of the European eel population, by fostering collaborative engagement among stakeholders (the fishing industry, scientists, NGOs, etc.) of the different countries, by fostering best practices and facilitating sustainable and shared management.

On the other hand, an organisation must also define what its main strategic goals are, regardless of the fact that those goals may change overtime. Strategic targets are some of the general results that the platform must achieve when implementing its Mission/Vision.

The goals that have been accepted by the participants for this first stage of this platform are those indicated below.

Goals:

- **BE RECOGNISED** as a consultative group by the administrations and the stakeholders.
- **RAISE AWARENESS** about the delicate situation of the eel by means of campaigns, promoting best practices, workshops, lectures, etc. and other dissemination tools.

- **CONTRIBUTE** to eel sustainability, by providing the knowledge and information of the different stakeholders, thus facilitating sustainable and responsible management of the eel.

There may be further goals, but in this early stage of the development of the platform, it was agreed that achieving those goals would be a necessary turning point for the consolidation of the platform.

Inner workings

All the platform members, as far as possible, participate and collaborate in driving the platform, with the purpose of achieving the envisaged goals. Regardless of some members being more active than others, coordinators play an essential role in driving the platform and agree the main functions to perform.

Some of the functions identified by the majority of the members are:

- **STRENGTHENING** state and inter-state collaboration to contribute to coordinated management (regional, national and international).
- **HARMONISING** the protocols and methodologies related to the eel and its management.
- **CREATING** a network to exchange, share information and management experiences between the stakeholders belonging to the platform.

Composition

Who should belong to or participate in the platform? All the members or entities making up the Governance Platform should have a shared sense of purpose and in line with **the recovery of the European eel population**. Incorporating members who do not share this goal would generate distortion and internal conflicts, making it impossible for the platform to operate smoothly.

In order to participate in the platform, all members have to prioritise eel recovery as the main goal and objective and, when necessary, to open up spaces for dialogue to raise awareness among those stakeholders whose activity could be hindering that recovery.

Multilevel Organisational Structure

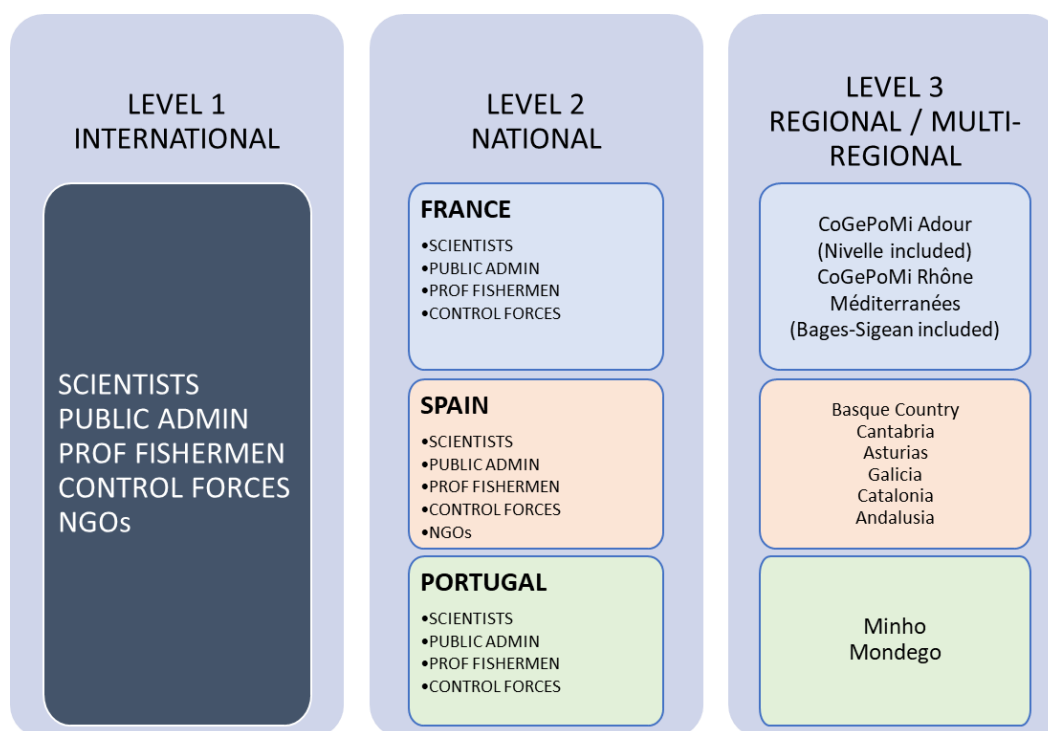
The platform, like any other social organisation, is a hierarchical and structured entity. That hierarchy, with the exception of the decision-makers associated to the public administrations, is not necessarily a formal hierarchization. Rather, the hierarchization is based on the types and degrees of responsibility that each member assumes and is recognised.

Social organisations, as has been said, are structured around achieving an ultimate aim, common to all their members. That goal provides the members as a whole with meaning and cohesion, and encourages them to act together, even though prior deliberations and agreements are required to achieve that harmony.

The multilevel structure highlights the complexity of the platform, as it implies different government levels working collaboratively to share experiences that allow the degree of knowledge between regions to be harmonised.

The different government levels within a single country are particularly more complex in those more decentralised countries where regional autonomous administrations hold deployed powers in eel stock management for their territory similar to those held by the State. That is the case of the autonomous regions in Spain. The cases of France and Portugal, with more centralised governments, are internally and, in appearance, less complex. However, the greatest degree of difficulty to harmonise common eel policies is perhaps between the administrations of each country. It is a real challenge for the Governance Platform project, but something, clearly, necessary and which was practically non-existent prior to the SUDOANG project. This project opens up an opportunity to turn it into reality.

This composition and structure proposal was initially based on the SUDOANG partnership. The following diagram sets out the main levels between the different international, national and regional administrations.



Internal Organisational Structure

Starting from this most basic structure proposal, an internal organisation proposal was produced focused on the functionality of the stakeholders, their role within the platform and the communication and interaction mechanisms between the different stakeholders and the relevant administrations.

This internal organisation model seeks to be a reflection of the new governance models based on inclusivity or diversity of stakeholders, to achieve a certain degree of representativeness of each of the sectors that they represent, and to facilitate the connectivity between them, etc.

During the project, a specific methodology was applied to produce the map of stakeholders (E8.1.1.) associated to each of the 10 river basins referenced in the project. This exercise has two practical applications within the project. One of those applications is to identify the stakeholders in the pilot basin selected in the project in order for the platform to test out its functionality in the monitoring and addressing of the problems pinpointed in the pilot basin. A second application is to set out for the future platform members a methodology that, once the SUDOANG project is completed, allows them to embark on a process to identify stakeholders and the influence/power relationship (positive or negative) between them in any river basin.

For the case in question, those stakeholder maps have also been used to identify the degree of diversity of stakeholders taking part in SUDOANG and which other stakeholders would be needed, thinking in terms of the future development of the platform. Those stakeholder maps also indicate their diversity according to the country, the region and the basin.

Therefore, the option could have been to set up, in each country, **professional committees**, as basic organisational units, which would underpin other higher organizational units.

Yet given that the SUDOANG partnership brings together organisations committed to eel recovery at different levels and in all sectors, efforts have been concentrated on those stakeholders to construct the most cohesive proposal possible.

In this vein, the first action focused on the setting up of those **national committees** in each country that bring together the stakeholders (scientists, the fishing industry, managers, control forces and NGOs). The following step would be to establish the **International Coordinator of the Platform**, that would include a representative per professional category and by country.

National Eel Committees have been set up for Portugal and Spain. That was not the case in France as a French Eel Committee had already been established there. The national committees would consist of representatives of each of the types of stakeholders (scientists, the fishing industry, managers, control forces and NGOs).



As regards the French case and in order to ensure no confusion between the French Eel Committee that already existed prior to the project and the French organisational model in SUDOANG, the choice has been, at the suggestion of the French members themselves, to set up the so-called French Team. That team will participate at coordination level, but with different functions from the Portuguese and Spanish national committees.

As already discussed, each Committee/Team will be led by a Coordinator.



The coordinators play an essential role throughout the start-up process and implementation of the platform. Some of the functions have been defined in that regard:

- Select, from among the SUDOANG partners and associates, representatives of the different stakeholder categories (researchers, the fishing industry, public administration (national and regional), NGO, Control Forces, etc.) to form part of the National Committee/Team.
- Contact with those possible members of the National Committee/Team, explain their role to them and invite them to take part.

- Setting up of the Portuguese National Committee, Spanish National Committee and the SUDOANG-French Team. The French Team will only be active within the sphere of the project.

After the work of the three coordinators – consulting all the members of the SUDOANG project and receiving favourable responses or deferral of response– had been carried out, the two national committees of Spain and Portugal were established, with the members representing the stakeholders involved in eel stock management in each country.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE - SPAIN	ORGANISATION	SECTOR
César Rodríguez	Ríos con Vida	NGO
Estíbaliz Díaz and María Mateo	AZTI	Researchers
Lluís Zamora	Girona Univ.	Researchers
Carlos Fernández Delgado and Ramón De Miguel	Cordoba Univ.	Researchers
Encarnación Benito	Ministry of Fisheries	Managers
Lucía García and Almudena Álvarez	Principality of Asturias	Managers
María José Rico	FECOPAS	Fishing Industry Representatives
Miguel Ángel Pacheco	SEPRONA	Control Forces

NATIONAL COMMITTEE - PORTUGAL	ORGANISATION	SECTOR
Isabel Domingos and Maria João Correia	FCUL/MARE	Researchers
Carlos Antunes	CIIMAR	Researchers
Ana Telhado(*)	APA	Managers
Marta Santo(*)	ICNF	Managers
Augusto Porto	APRMM	Fishing Industry Representatives

José Vieira	GNR_SEPNA	Control Forces
Carlos Loureiro(*)	ASAE	Control Forces

(*) Will only be active during the SUDOANG project.

SUDOANG-FRENCH TEAM	ORGANISATION	SECTOR
Hilaire Drouineau and Gilles Adam		Researchers Administration

In the French case, the fact a National Eel Committee exists in France is considered to be an advantage for the project. The coordinators of the Portuguese and Spanish national committees, along with other members of the SUDOANG project, can receive direct information from the coordinators of the French Team, on the experience of the Migratory Fish Management Committees (COGEPOMI) and on the experience of the French National Eel Committee. This information is valuable, as it can drive the development of the governance platform itself which is emerging in the SUDOANG project. Therefore, one of the main functions of the SUDOANG-French Team is to be the contact with members of the French National eel and COGEPOMI committees, throughout the project, and inform them of the progress of the governance platform.

Once the project is completed, the French National Eel Committee will decide whether or not it is in its interest to join the platform.

International Coordinator

Once the Committees and Team have been set up, and in a second phase, the INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR has to be established to address the issues on this scale.

Select members of this International Coordinator:

- 1 scientific representative per country
- 1 professional fishing representative per country
- 1 representative of the national public administration per country
- 1 representative of the Control Forces per country
- 1 NGO representative per country

At the time of setting up the International Coordinator, its members must define its main functions.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR	ORGANISATION	SECTOR	COUNTRY
César Rodríguez	Ríos con Vida	NGO	SPAIN
Estibaliz Díaz	AZTI	Researchers	SPAIN
Encarnación Benito	Ministry of Fisheries	Managers	SPAIN
María José Rico	FECOPAS	Fishing Industry Representatives	SPAIN
Miguel Ángel Pacheco	SEPRONA	Control Forces	SPAIN
Isabel Domingos	FCUL/MARE	Researchers	PORTUGAL

Selection of the French representatives is underway at the time of writing this report.

The International Coordinator, when it so deems appropriate, may meet, share information and assess the eel stock situation, from a supranational perspective. The International Coordinator does not have decision-making capacity and neither are its proposals binding, but in those cases where international collaboration (between two or more countries) is deemed an essential measure, the International Coordinator may propose, suggest, etc. any measure or action that are well-reasoned and which, obviously, are to benefit the eel.

4. NEXT STEPS

During the coming months, in the framework of Activity A8.3 - Driving the Implementation of the Governance Platform, the intention is to select a pilot basin, from the ten basins referred to in the project, to identify the key stakeholders of that basins and, along with the local stakeholders and the members of the SUDOANG project, perform an initial analysis of the basin.

The results of this analysis will be categorised and prioritised by importance. Out of the list of problems identified by local stakeholders, the one or ones will be selected that can be, realistically, addressed by the governance platform, in the current evolution situation at the time.

The problems to be tackled by the platform should be totally or partially affordable and doable during the time allocated for that activity. It is not so much a question of obtaining a final result and solving the identified problem. The purpose of the pilot project is to implement the running of the platform, in other words, ensure that the platform focuses the problem on the chosen basin, for its members and the local stakeholders to discuss how to address it, to define what type of action can the platform can implement to help minimise or solve the problem, etc. The final goal is to monitor the whole process

as regards aspects of structure, composition and functions of the platform. During this monitoring, the weakest points shown by the platform, in other words what has worked well and less well, etc. will be identified.

Proposals and changes to strengthen the platform will be based on the monitoring results. The most advanced version of the platform in the framework of the project will emerge from the changes implemented to strengthen those results. It is hoped, with the integration of those changes, the platform will be in a reasonably acceptable state to face its future enthusiastically. It is desirable for that to be the case, but its continuity, once SUDOANG ends, is also going to depend on the willingness and time that the majority of its members or the most committed and proactive ones wish to dedicate to it. Should the platform decline, once the project has ended, and an organisation is not set up with a similar composition, collaborative engagement and goals to this platform, the eel stock problem will be very likely to perpetuate.

One of this project's main contributions to eel stock management is the setting up of the Spanish and Portuguese national committees, along with the eel International Coordinator. These institutions are an opportunity to efficiently improve eel stock management for the countries involved in the project. The SUDOANG Project is clearly an opportunity to show that collaboration and engagement, along with the interactive website, is a more efficient way to address complex problems, as is the case of the recovery of the European eel.