

REPORTING FORMAT FOR THE GREAT BUSTARD MOU AND ACTION PLAN**SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

This reporting format is designed to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan associated with the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*). Reporting on the Action Plan's implementation will support exchange of information throughout the range and assist the identification of necessary future actions by the Signatory States. The questions presented here go beyond the scope of information already requested from CMS Contracting Parties for national reports to the CMS Conference of the Parties.

GENERAL INFORMATION

<p>Agency or institution responsible for the preparation of this report</p> <p>State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic</p>
<p>List any other agencies, institutions, or NGOs that have provided input</p> <p>Slovak Ornithological Society/Birdlife Slovakia Raptors Protection in Slovakia</p>
<p>Reports submitted to date: 2004</p> <p>First: 01/12/01 – 31/12/2004 Second:</p>
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<p>Memorandum in effect in country since: 01/12/01 (following signature on 28/11/01)</p>
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PART I. GENERAL

This questionnaire follows the structure and numbering of the Action Plan annexed to the Memorandum of Understanding to make it easier to read the relevant action points before the form is filled in. In some cases, however, sub-actions were not listed separately for the sake of simplicity and to avoid duplications. They should however be taken into consideration when answering the questions.

0. National work programme

Is there a national work programme or action plan already in place in your country for the Great Bustard pursuant to Paragraph 4(g) of the Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes No

Rescue Plan for protected critically endangered species – Great Bustard

Since 2005, Slovakia implements project LIFE05 NAT/SK/000115 - Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia for the period 5 years (2005 – 2009), which contribute to implementing above mentioned Rescue plan.

1. Habitat protection

1.1 Designation of protected areas.

To what extent are the display, breeding, stop-over and wintering sites covered by protected areas?

Designation of protected areas under national law	Classification of Special Protection Areas according to the requirements of Art.4.1 of the EC Birds Directive
<input type="checkbox"/> Fully (>75%) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High (50-75%) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (10-49%) <input type="checkbox"/> Low (<10%) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully (>75%) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High (50-75%) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (10-49%) <input type="checkbox"/> Low (<10%) <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable ¹

What measures were taken to ensure the adequate protection of the species and its habitat at these sites?

- Two protected areas designated for the protection of Great Bustard
- Management plans drafted for both protected areas
- Agro-environmental scheme for the protection of *Otis tarda* adopted as a part of the Rural Development Plan for Slovakia for the period 2007-2013 and implemented in one protected area
- Memoranda of understanding areas aimed at reducing disturbance of *Otis tarda* from agricultural activities and from predators concluded with hunters and farmers using land in concerned protected areas
- Marking of electric lines to reduce a risk of collision of *Otis* individuals with power lines
- Purchase of land for the protection of *Otis tarda*
- Restoration of habitats for *Otis tarda*

Where are the remaining gaps?

- Implementation of the agro-environmental scheme in one of the two protected areas designated for the protection of *Otis tarda*.
- Installation of infrastructure for more effective monitoring of *Otis tarda*

¹ The species occurs only irregularly, no regular stop-over or wintering sites identified.

Are currently unoccupied, but potential breeding habitats identified in your country?

Yes No Not applicable²

If yes, please explain how these areas are protected or managed to enable the re-establishment of Great Bustard.

Conservation actions focused on both protected areas designated for *Otis tarda*. In both protected areas effort is made for restoration of habitats in cooperation with farmers managing land in question. In Lehnice SPA, cca 300 ha of habitats for *Otis tarda* were restored in the period 2005-2007. In 2008, farmers managing land in Lehnice SPA have entered into agro-environmental schemes on area of 1190 ha.

In Syslovské polia SPA proper land management that would allow *Otis tarda* breeding have been negotiated with local cooperative farm.

1.2 Measures taken to ensure the maintenance of Great Bustard habitats outside of protected areas.

Please describe what measures have been taken to maintain land-use practices beneficial for Great Bustard outside of protected areas (e.g., set-aside and extensification schemes, cultivation of alfalfa and oilseed rape for winter, maintenance of rotational grazing, etc.).

No *Otis tarda* specific conservation measures have been taken to maintain land use practices beneficial for the Great Bustard outside protected areas.

Prohibition of hunting of Great Bustard applies on the whole territory of Slovakia, species is strictly protected.

For habitat protection - none

To what extent do these measures, combined with site protection, cover the national population?

- Fully (>75%)
 Most (50-75%)
 Some (10-49%)
 Little (<10%)
 Not at all
 Not applicable¹

(majority of the national population inhabit protected areas designated for the protection of Great Bustard)

Are recently (over the last 20 years) abandoned Great Bustard breeding habitats mapped in your country?

Yes No Not applicable¹

Please refer to above answers

What habitat management measures have been taken to encourage the return of Great Bustard?

Major: Growing of crop beneficial for *Otis tarda*

Minor: Restoration of grasslands

If there were any measures taken, please provide information on their impact.

Breeding of *Otis tarda* have not been recorded in Slovakia since 2006.

²Countries *outside* of the historic (beginning of 20th Century) breeding range of the species.

1.3 Measures taken to avoid fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats.

Are new projects potentially causing fragmentation of the species' habitat (such as construction of highways and railways, irrigation, planting of shelterbelts, afforestation, power lines, etc.) subject to environmental impact assessment in your country?

Yes No Not applicable¹

Is there any aspect of the existing legislation on impact assessment that limits its effective application to prevent fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats?

Yes No Not applicable¹

If yes, please provide details.

Insufficient enforcement

Have there been any such projects implemented in any Great Bustard habitat in your country since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

Yes No Not applicable¹

Please, give details and describe the outcome of impact monitoring if available.

For example, plan to establish airport nearby Lehnice SPA.

2. Prevention of hunting, disturbance and other threats

2.1 Hunting.

Is Great Bustard afforded strict legal protection in your country?

Yes No

Please, give details of any hunting restrictions imposed for the benefit of Great Bustard including those on timing of hunting and game management activities.

No hunting of Great Bustard is permitted all year round in Slovakia. Great Bustard is all-year protected game species according to Act no. 23/1962 Coll. on Hunting.

Please, indicate to what extent these measures ensure the protection of the national Great Bustard population?

The national population is covered by restrictions on hunting to prevent hunting-related disturbance:

- Fully (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable¹

2.2 Prevention of disturbance.

What measures have been taken to prevent disturbance of Great Bustard in your country, including both breeding birds and single individuals or small flocks on migration?

- Two Special Protected Areas designated for the protection of Great Bustard
- Regulations through which respective SPAs have been designated establish restrictions to prevent disturbance of GB, for instance access of public/ visitors to SPA is prohibited, except on tourism trail
- Memoranda of Understanding concluded with local hunting societies – MoUs include measures to be implemented by hunters that would decrease disturbance of GB from their activities.

Please, indicate to what extent these measures have ensured the protection of the national population.

The national population is covered by restrictions on other activities causing disturbance:

- Fully (>75%)
- Most (50-75%)
- Some (10-49%)
- Little (<10%)
- Not at all
- Not applicable¹

2.3.1 Prevention of predation.

What is the significance of predation to Great Bustard in your country?

Medium significant

What are the main predator species?

Wandering (maverick) dogs, fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), stone marten (*Martes foina*), some *Corvidae* species

What measures have been taken to control predators in areas where Great Bustard occurs regularly?

Increased hunting of predator species, or other ways of elimination of predators agreed with local hunters

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (predation reduced by more than 50%)
- Partially effective (predation reduced by 10–49%)
- Less effective (predation reduced by less than 10%)
- Not applicable¹

2.3.2 Adoption of measures for power lines.

What is the significance of collision with power lines in your country?

high

What proactive and corrective measures have been taken to reduce the mortality caused by existing power lines in your country?

Marking of power lines (12 km of power lines in Lehnice SPA)

What is the size of the populations affected by these corrective measures?

1 individual in Lehnice SPA

In winter – 200-300 individuals wintering in Slovakia

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (collision with power lines reduced by more than 50%)
- Partially effective (collision with power lines reduced by 10–49%)
- Ineffective (collision with power lines reduced by less than 10%)
- Not applicable¹

Impact unknown so far, measures implemented only in 2008.

2.3.3 Compensatory measures.

What is the size (in hectares) of Great Bustard habitat lost or degraded for any reasons since the Memorandum of Understanding entered into effect (1 June 2001)?

Cca 20 000 ha in the whole Slovakia

What is the size of the populations affected?

N/A for breeding population

3 % of European population of *Otis tarda* during winter

Were these habitat losses compensated? Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

If yes, please explain how.

Were these measures effective?

Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Please, give details on the effectiveness or explain why they were not effective if that is the case.

3. Possession and trade

Is collection of Great Bustard eggs or chicks, the possession of and trade in the birds and their eggs prohibited in your country?

Yes No

How are these restrictions enforced? What are the remaining shortcomings, if any?

Not relevant – no breeding in Slovakia since 2006

Please indicate if any exemption is granted or not all of these activities are prohibited.

Exemption for collection of eggs has been granted for the purposes of the LIFE NATURE project “Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia.”

Exemption allows to collect abandoned eggs (in case of nesting of GB) and to transfer them to GB breeding station in Hungary.

4. Recovery measures

4.1 Captive breeding* in emergency situations.

Is captive breeding playing any role in Great Bustard conservation in your country?

Yes No

* In effect, “captive breeding” should be read as “captive rearing” according to current practices.

Please, describe the measures, staff and facilities involved and how these operations comply with the IUCN criteria on reintroductions.

4.2 Reintroduction.

Have there been any measures taken to reintroduce the species in your country?

Yes No

If yes, please describe the progress. If there was any feasibility study carried out, please summarize its conclusions.

No special reintroduction program was implemented. However, restoration of habitats beneficial for GB was performed in Lehnice SPA. Regular occurrence of one GB female observed in this area since 2006 as result of creation of proper habitats.

4.3 Monitoring of the success of release programmes.

Are captive reared birds released in your country?

Yes No

If yes, please summarize the experience with release programmes in your country. What is the survival rate of released birds? What is the breeding performance of released birds?

Not applicable

What is the overall assessment of release programmes based on the survival of released birds one year after release?

- Effective (the survival is about the same as of the wild ones)
- Partially effective (the survival rate is lower than 75% of the wild birds)
- Ineffective (the survival is less than 25% of wild birds)
- Not applicable³

5. Cross-border conservation measure

Has your country undertaken any cross-border conservation measures with neighbouring countries?

Yes No Not applicable⁴

Please, give details of your country's collaboration with neighbouring countries on national surveys, research, monitoring and conservation activities for Great Bustard. Especially, list any measures taken to harmonise legal instruments protecting Great Bustard and its habitats, as well as funding you have provided to Great Bustard for particular conservation actions in other Range States.

Regular – monthly counting of western-pannonian population of GB implemented jointly with Hungarian and Austrian experts.

Along the Slovak – Hungarian – Austrian borders SPAs for GB were designated, however no special effort was made in terms of harmonising applicable legal instruments.

Management measures consulted at the expert level with Hungarian and Austrian experts

Slovakia has not provided funding for conservation actions in other Ranger States.

³ No release is taking place in the country.

⁴ For countries which do not have any transboundary population.

6. Monitoring and research

6.1.1 Monitoring of population size and population trends.

Are the breeding, migratory or wintering Great Bustard populations monitored in your country?

Yes No

What proportion of the national population is monitored?

- All (>75%)
 Most (50-75%)
 Some (10-49%)
 Little (<10%)
 None
 Not applicable¹

What is the size and trend in the national population?⁵

Breeding/resident population

Non-breeding population (on passage, wintering)

No. of adult males: some migrating from No. of adult males: cca 120
bordering countries No. of females: cca 120
No. of females: 0-3 in 2005 No. immature males: cca 30
No. immature males: _____

Trend: Declined by 100 % over the last 10 years Trend: Declined by ___% over the last 10 years
 Stable Stable
 Increased by ___% over the last 10 years Increased by 8 -10% over the last 10 years

For countries where the species occurs only occasionally, please give the details of known observations within the reporting period:

Not applicable

6.1.2 Monitoring of the effects of habitat management.

Is the effect of habitat conservation measures monitored in your country?

Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.

Not applicable, no long time records

What can be learned from these studies?

N/A

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

Regular monitoring of *Otis tarda* performed since 2005 in the two SPAs – Lehnice and Syslovské polia within a framework of LIFE-NATURE project Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia.

⁵ Only for countries where the species occurs regularly.

6.2.1 Comparative ecological studies.

Have there been any comparative studies carried out on the population dynamics, habitat requirements, effects of habitat changes and causes of decline in your country in collaboration with other Range States?

Yes No Not applicable¹

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published

N/A

What can be learned from these studies?

N/A

What are the remaining gaps where the Memorandum of Understanding could assist?

More strict enforcement/monitoring from international level, that countries should be motivated to implement it intensively.

6.2.2 Studies on mortality factors.

Are the causes of Great Bustard mortality understood in your country?

Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.

Monitoring reports and reports on disturbance compiled on the basis of regular monitoring of GB population and disturbance factors since 2005.

What can be learned from these studies?

Critical factor causing mortality of GB is collision of GB individuals with power lines. Loss of habitats beneficial for *Otis tarda* is the second key factor negatively influencing population of GB in Slovakia. What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

6.2.3 Investigation of factors limiting breeding success.

Are the factors limiting breeding success in core populations understood in your country?

Yes Partially No Not applicable⁶

Please, provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published

Monitoring reports and reports on disturbance compiled on the basis of regular monitoring of GB population and disturbance factors since 2005 in a framework of the LIFE NATURE project Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia..

What can be learned from these studies?

Absence of proper nesting habitats is responsible for (temporary) absence of breeding of GB in Slovakia.

⁶ Only for breeding countries.

What are the remaining gaps and what measures are you going to take to address these gaps?

Continuous consultations with farmers managing land in concerned SPAs concerning growing of crops beneficial for *Otis tarda*.

Purchase of land for *Otis tarda* protection and subsequent restoration of habitats beneficial for *Otis tarda*.

6.2.4 Studies on migration.

Were there any studies on migration routes and wintering places carried out in your country?

Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

Only transboundary transfers are monitored

Where are the key sites and what is the size of the population they support? N/A

Do you have any knowledge about the origin of these birds supported by ringing or other marking methods?

Yes

What are the remaining gaps and what measures will your country do to address these gaps?

7. Training of staff working in conservation bodies

Is there any mechanism in place in your country to share information on biological characteristics and living requirements of Great Bustard, legal matters, census techniques and management practices to personnel working regularly with the species?

Yes No Not applicable¹

If yes, please describe it.

Exchange of information and data between State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic and NGOs concerned with protection of *Otis tarda*.

Have personnel dealing with Great Bustard participated in any exchange programme in other Range States? Yes No Not applicable¹

If yes, please give details on number of staff involved, country visited and how the lessons were applied in your country.

There is no formal exchange programme in place, occasional exchanges occur within a framework of LIFE NATURE programme "Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia"

8. Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustards and their habitat

What measures have been taken to increase the awareness about the protection needs of the species and its habitat in your country since signing the Memorandum of Understanding?

Public awareness material produced

Press releases

Excursions and particularly lectures organised for different stakeholders, including children and students

Do farmers, shepherds, political decision makers and local and regional authorities support Great Bustard conservation?

Yes Partially No

What are the remaining gaps or problems and how are you going to address them?

Low compensatory payments available to farmers

9. Economic measures

Have there been any initiatives taken to develop economic activities that are in line with the conservation requirements of Great Bustard in your country?

- Yes Partially No Not applicable¹

What percentage of the population is covered in total by these measures?

- All (>75%)
 Most (50-75%)
 Some (10-49%)
 Little (<10%)
 None
 Not applicable

How effective were these measures?

- Effective (more than 50% of the targeted area is managed according to the species' needs)
 Partially effective (10–49% of the targeted area is managed according to the species' needs)
 Ineffective (less than 10% according to the species' needs)
 Not applicable¹

10. Threats

Please, fill in the table below on main threats to the species in your country. Use the threat scores categories below to quantify their significance at national level. Please, provide an explanation on what basis you have assigned the threat score and preferably provide reference. Add additional lines, if necessary.

Threat scores:
Critical: a factor causing or likely to cause **very rapid declines** (>30% over 10 years).
High: a factor causing or likely to cause **rapid declines** (20-30% over 10 years).
Medium: a factor causing or likely to cause relatively **slow, but significant, declines** (10-20% over 10 years).
Low: a factor causing or likely to cause **fluctuations**.
Local: a factor causing local declines but likely to cause **negligible declines at population level**.
Unknown: a factor that is likely to affect the species but it is unknown to what extent.

Threat name	Threat score	Explanation and reference
Habitat loss	Critical	
Losses of eggs and chicks	Unknown	no breeding
Predation	Medium	
Collision with powerlines	Critical	
Human disturbance	Medium	
Pesticides	Medium	
Illegal hunting	Local	
Others (specify)	N/A	

PART II. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Please report on the implementation of the country-specific actions listed for your country in Part II of the Action Plan and provide information if that is not already covered by your answers under Part I. Please describe not only the measures taken but also their impact on Great Bustard or its habitat in the context of the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan. Where you have already answered on country-specific actions in Part I, please only add a reference to the relevant answer here.

Slovakia specific actions

Report structured according to the Rescue Plan for protected Critically Endangered Species – Great Bustard

- in Slovakia, project LIFE05 NAT/SK/000115 - Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia was approved and is financed by European commission for the period 2005 – 2009 many activities are realised by this project (hereby after only “LIFE project”)

1. Policy and legislation

1.1. Agriculture policies

- 1.1.1 To promote the maintenance of biodiversity as an objective of agricultural policies alongside production objectives including and elaboration of a sectoral plan under the EU biodiversity strategy. Agricultural policy and legislation have to make suitable conditions for the environmentally acceptable management. It is very important to support extensive /traditional/ methods of management and to establish gene pool refuges with natural biodiversity elements.**

No specific actions were implemented

- 1.1.2 Preservation and recovery of extensive farming. To apply the agro-environment regulations to encourage land uses, agrochemical use and timing of agricultural practices which are compatible with Great Bustard conservation.

Nature conservation authorities developed a proposal for agro environmental scheme for the protection of *Otis tarda* and were advocating the inclusion of the AES for *Otis tarda* into the Slovak RDP 2007-2013, whose implementation is financed by the European Commission. The scheme has been finally included into the RDP 2007-2013.

According to this scheme, on land with occurrence of *Otis tarda*, farmer is obliged to meet the following conditions:

- to maintain min.70% share of winter wheat, oilseed rape, fodder grass or alfalfa (in combination or solo) of whole arable land
- no irrigation
- limited use of fertilizers
- mowing from the centre of the parcel to the parcel edges
- warning chains using
- no use of rodenticides and insecticides
- use of permitted plant protection chemicals only

The Slovak RDP 2007-2013 was approved by the European Commission on 04/12/2007 and include several measures for biodiversity protection. The AES for *Otis tarda* constitutes a sub scheme No. 5.3.2.1.3.3.2 in the AES for threatened bird species. The approved document is presented at the website of the Ministry of the Land-use of the Slovak Republic (<http://www.land.gov.sk>). The AES is applicable in Syslovské polia and Lehnice SPAs, both areas designated for the protection of Great Bustard in Slovakia. Detailed conditions for application for participation in AES are regulated through “Regulation by the Slovak Government from 16 April 2008 establishing conditions for selection of applications for participation in agro-environmental schemes and conditions for provision of agro-environmental payments”

Approved payments under the existing AES for the protection of *Otis tarda* are lower compared to ones originally proposed and applied in the pilot AES. This may result in lower interest in participation in the scheme by concerned agricultural entities. In spite of that one cooperative farm – Agripent – managing land in Lehnice SPA has applied for participation in agro-environmental scheme from 2008 to and up to 2012 in 05/2008.

1.1.3 To adopt the legislation for renting and purchase of the Great Bustard key habitats and for the compensation payment to those farmers who change the management in Great Bustard friendly way. To find the governmental as well as non-governmental financial recourses for the support of extensive management methods and for the compensation payment.

Although, in the reporting period some 46 hectares of land in SPAs designated for the protection of Great Bustard in Slovakia were purchased by the State Nature Conservancy. Currently, agricultural land in state ownership in accordance with applicable laws should be managed by the Slovak Land Fund. Amendment of the Act no. 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection, than would allow SNC proceed with more extensive land purchase has been still pending.

SNC obtained grant from European Commission (1,500,000 EUR) through its financial instrument for the environment – LIFE for co financing of the project Conservation of *Otis tarda* in Slovakia.

Pilot agro-environmental schemes were funded in the period 2005-2007 in the Lehnice SPA through incentive instrument regulated by the Act no. 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection and referred in the Law as “the Financial Contribution”. This incentive measure should encourage land users to manage their land/property in way that is beneficial for the targeted species of conservation importance.

1.2 International cooperation

To carry out an annual coordinated census of the Great Bustard in cooperation with Hungary and Austria. To take part at joint meetings and research field trips which are organised for the purpose of the conservation of the Great Bustard.

Coordinated census of the Great Bustard in cooperation with Hungary and Austria has been performed monthly since 2006. Field counting is followed with join meetings of Slovak, Hungarian and Austrian expert. The results are presented in the Annual Monitoring Reports that are elaborated in a framework of the LIFE project.

2. Species and habitat protection

2.1 Designation of protected areas

2.1.1 To establish protected areas under national law in SPAs and other areas harbouring nationally important populations of the Great Bustard.

Two Special Protection Areas have been designated in Slovakia for the protection of *Otis tarda*.

Lehnice SPA was designate through the Regulation by the Ministry of the Environment No 377 from 8.8.2005 effective since 1.9.2005.

Syslovské polia SPA was designate through the Regulation by the Ministry of the Environment No 234 dated 12.4.2006 effective since 1.5 2006.

Syslovské polia SPA is continuous to NATURA 2000 areas in Hungary and Austria and serve as wintering site for the Western Pannonian population of Great bustard shared by Slovakia, Austria and Hungary.

2.2. Protection and management of protected areas

2.2.1 To prevent developments that could change or fragment the habitat, such as the construction of highways, roads, railways and power lines, or irrigation and landholding concentration schemes.

For the assessment and evaluation of impact of development activities toward Great Bustard, using of the regulations from the Act no. 24/2006 Coll. on Environmental impact assessment.

Management plans for both project sites, Syslovské polia SPA and Lehnice SPA, have been developing parallel since May 2005. In 2005, two expert meetings were organised by SNC with the aim to discuss the approach to and methodology for drafting of management plans.

The MoE sets instructions unifying the form and structure of the content of management plans for all the SPAs in Slovakia. Core specifications of the 2 management plans are based on the scientific data (zoology, ornithology and botany) in relation to the agricultural use of the project sites.

The draft SPA management plans provide definitions of the favourable status for individual qualifying species, including Great Bustard, the examples of tools and measures to be undertaken to achieve the described status. Main focus during the phase of elaboration was on the relation between land use and the requirements for ensuring the favourable status for the target species.

Draft management plans of Syslovské polia SPA and Lehnice SPA have been harmonised with the plans elaborated for neighbouring SPAs at the territory of Hungary and Austria. In the process of elaboration of the management plans for the Slovak SPAs, the experiences of Hungarian and Austrian experts were taken into consideration.

The whole process of management plan elaboration was closely linked to the continual consultations with key stakeholders in order to incorporate their comments already in the drafting phase and to minimise conflicts in the phase of management plan implementation. Draft management plans served as the base for the elaboration of pilot agro–environmental scheme for *O. tarda*.

2.2.2 To increase habitat diversity and food availability through the increase of legume crops and unploughed fallows and the temporary set-aside of cultivated land.

Pilot activities were performed in the reporting period in Lehnice SPA. As much as 300 ha habitats beneficial for *Otis tarda* in Lehnice SPA:

2.2.3 To control key predators, in cases where predation is found to be a significant problem, in order to prevent high levels of breeding failure.

Memoranda of understanding were signed with three hunting grounds active in the SPAs. Measures to reduce negative impact of predators were agreed through memoranda.

2.2.4 To reduce pesticide use in order to ensure adequate food resources.

Restrictions on the use of chemicals in agriculture activities are established by the respective regulations through which SPAs in question were established.

2.3 Hunting

2.3.1 To prevent any hunting or poaching of the Great Bustard. This should include law enforcement and education of hunters and farmers on whose crops the bustards may feed (see 4.1).

Hunting of Great Bustard is prohibited all year round in Slovakia. The two SPAs are regularly (on a nearly daily basis) monitored by wardens.

3. Monitoring and research

3.1. Population monitoring

3.1.1. To standardise census methods to be used throughout the range of the Great Bustard.

Census methods harmonised with Austria and Hungary. Monthly census of Great Bustard performed once a month jointly with Hungarian and Austrian experts.

3.1.2. To develop and implement an international monitoring programme which will accurately quantify and monitor trends in: the distribution, population size, density of breeding males and sex ratio of the Great Bustard throughout its range in Slovakia.

No formal international monitoring programme in place. Coordinated and joint monitoring of the size and the structure and the Western Pannonian population of *Otis tarda* shared by Slovakia, Austria and Hungary performed once a month. Data are summarised in Annual monitoring reports.

3.1.3 To evaluate the effects of habitat management methods used for the purpose of improvement the habitat conditions of the Great Bustard.

The effects of habitat management methods used for the purpose of improvement the habitat conditions of the Great Bustard are being evaluated in a framework of the LIFE project since 2005.

3.1.4 To realize the research of factors causing the mortality of the Great Bustard.

Research of factors causing mortality of the Great Bustard is implemented in a framework of the LIFE project.

3.2. Habitat requirements

3.2.1. To investigate the diet of adults and chicks and to relate it to food availability.

Limited activities were implemented in a framework of drafting management plans for both SPAs.

3.3. Breeding biology

3.3.1. To determine the breeding success of the Great Bustard and to analyse the factors which have an influence on breeding success, such as food availability, predation, social structure.

Capacities for monitoring of breeding success were available in the reporting period; however, no nesting was recorded since 2005.

3.4. *Movements and wintering areas*

3.4.1. To determine the movement patterns of the Great Bustard by marking birds. To enhance international cooperation in order to locate the wintering areas and to study habitats requirements in winter.

Coordinated census of the Great Bustard in cooperation with Hungary and Austria has been performed monthly since 2006. Field counting is followed with joint meetings of Slovak, Hungarian and Austrian expert. The results are presented in the Annual Monitoring Reports that are elaborated in a framework of the LIFE project.

Movement patterns have been also studied in cooperation Hungarian and Austrian experts.

4. Public awareness and training

4.1. *Rural community*

4.1.1 To inform the rural community about the conservation needs of the Great Bustard. To on the species requirements as well as on the potentially harmful or beneficial farming practices, seeking the collaboration of farmers.

Numerous meetings with and lectures for farmers were organised in a framework of the LIFE project.

4.2 *General public*

4.2.1 To increase public awareness on the need to protect the Great Bustard and its habitat.

Various public awareness materials information materials were produced namely: Badges (1000 pcs.), T-shirts (300 pcs.), stickers (10.000 pcs.) and Puzzle (500 pcs.) were prepared and printed.

Lectures and guided tours/excursions focused on the conservation of Great Bustard are implemented for various stakeholders groups including school children and students

Voluntary guides were trained to be available for individuals and groups interested in conservation aspects of Great Bustard.