



# Limits of the derogation on Great cormorant in practice – a Plan for the Europe-wide coordinated management action

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Predators and invasive species – a threat or a business opportunity  
International Conference

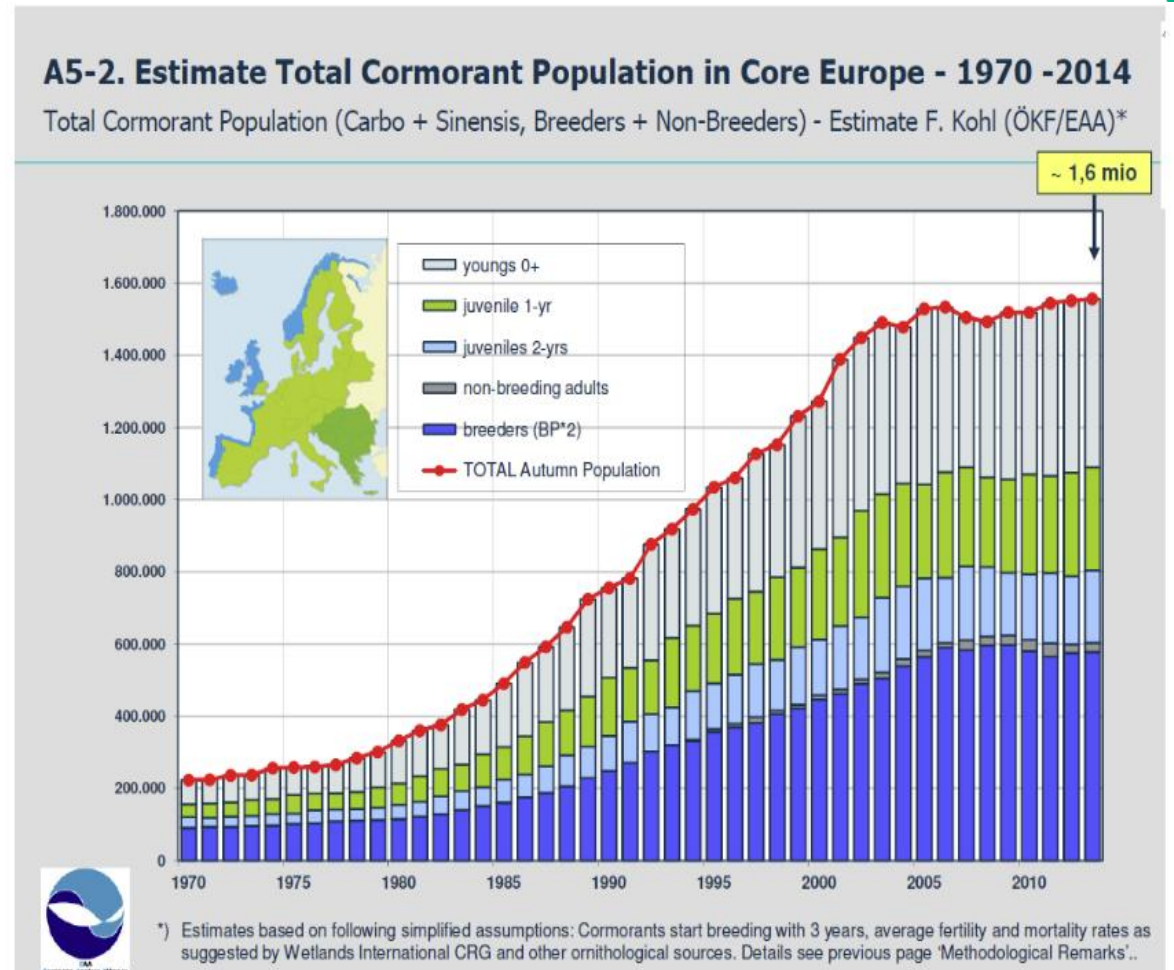
17-18 June 2025, Tallinn

# Facts on Great Cormorant

## European population size and distribution

- The European Great cormorant population is estimated at 803,000-1,020,000 mature individuals. (BirdLife International 2015)
- The total number of European population is estimated at 1,600,000 individuals. (European Anglers Alliance 2015)
- 406,000-421,000 pairs of breeding population (Keller, V., Herrando, S., Voříšek, P. (2020)
- Breeders x 3,75 (YOY + immature) = total number of population. (Intercafe 2012a)

**Different age groups with different habits has to be counted.**



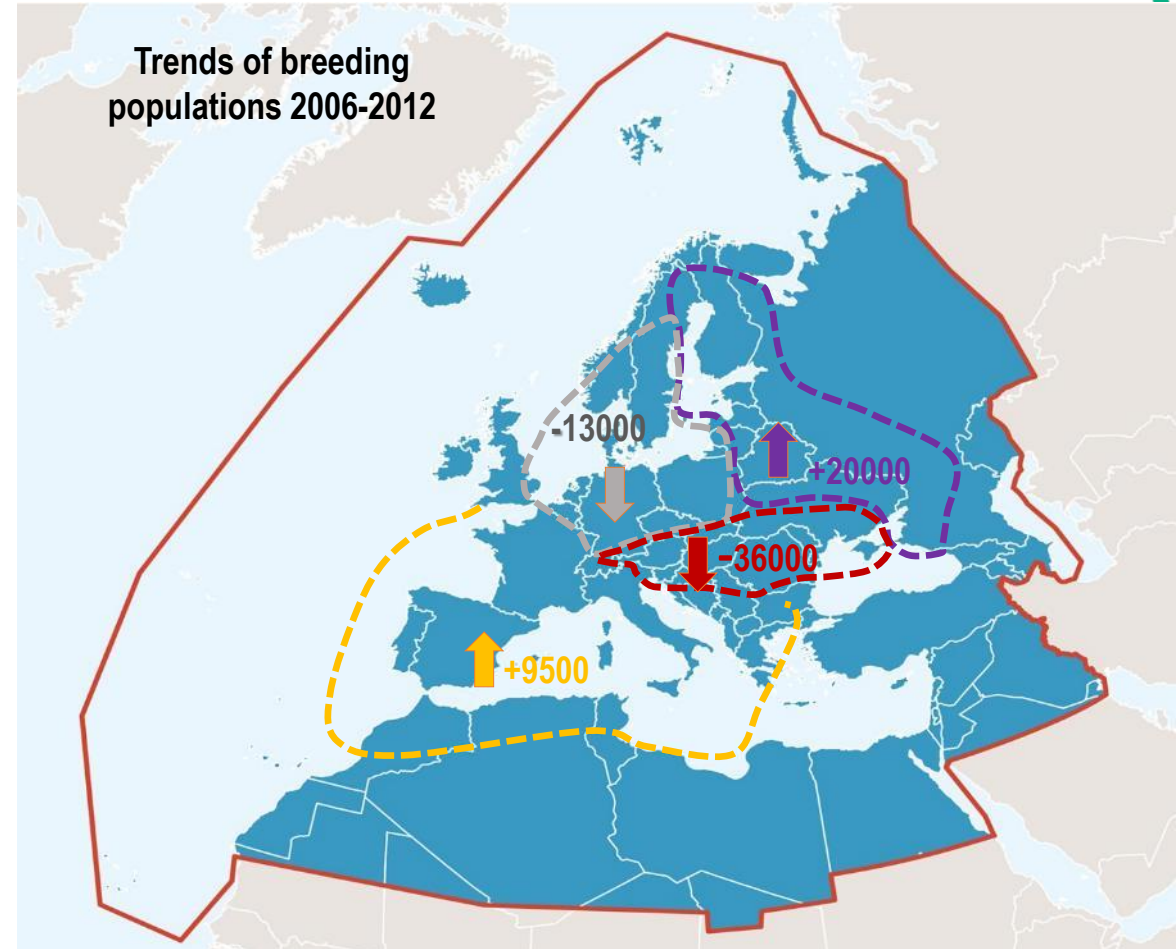
Source: European Anglers Alliance

# Facts on Great Cormorant

## European population size and distribution

- The overall population trend is increasing, within its European range it is estimated to be increasing. (BirdLife International 2015)
- Conservational status has changed to least concern. (IUCN Red List 2021)
- Regional differences can be detected in the trend of population size of breeders. (CorMan project First report 2013)

**This picture indicates a lack of coordinated population management in addition to the different environmental conditions .**

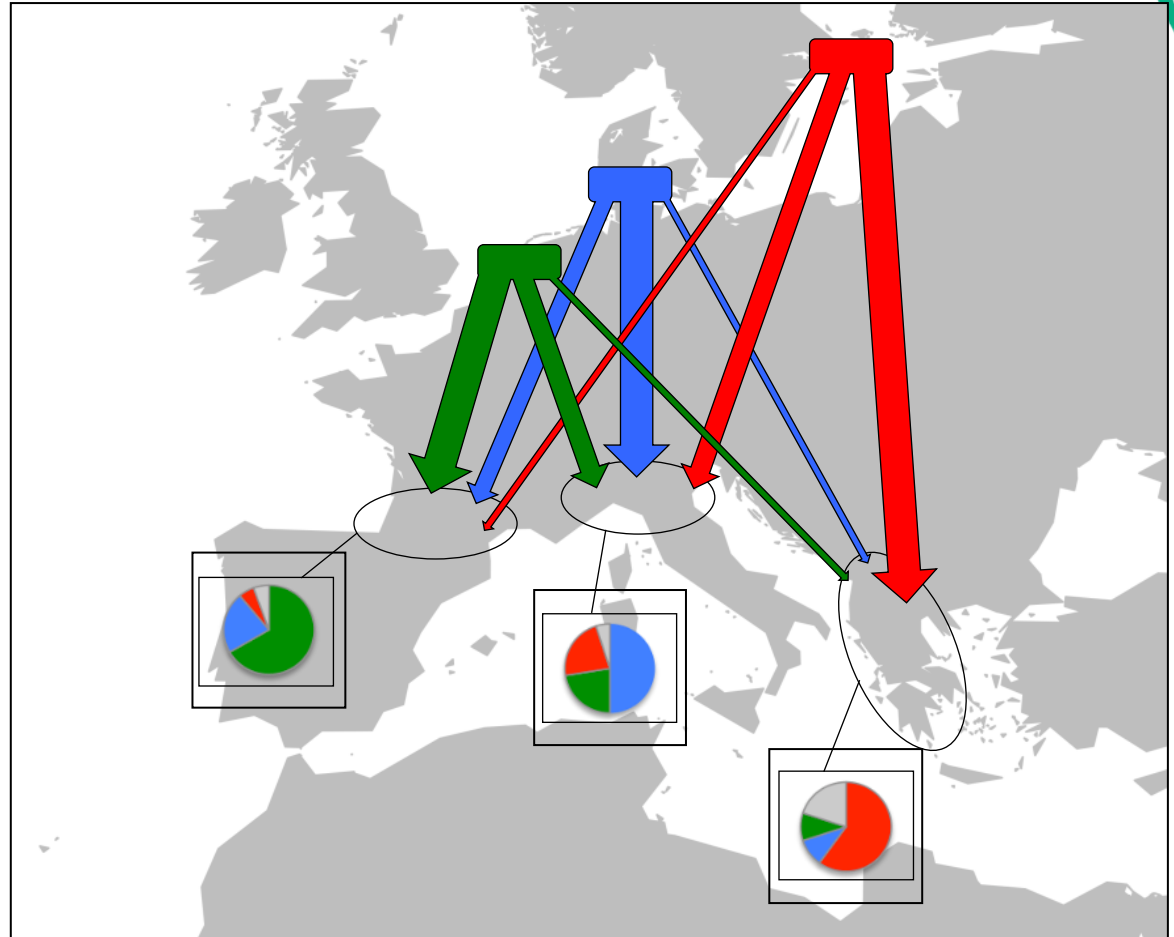


Source: Cormorant counts in the Western Palearctic – Organised by the EC initiative CorMan in collaboration with the IUCN-Wetlands International Cormorant Research Group

# Facts on Great Cormorant European population size and distribution

- (A) Atlantic-North Sea/western Mediterranean (122,000 pairs); (B) Baltic/central European (163,000 pairs); (C) Black Sea/eastern Mediterranean (88,000). (Intercafe 2012a)
- Main breeding areas in Europe without Region ,C': Denmark (A), Finland (B), Sweden (B), Estonia (B), Germany (B), Poland (B). (CorMan project Report 2013)
- Main wintering areas, where the average winter temperature is above  $-5.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . (Intercafe 2012a)

**Breeding and wintering areas are different, so the locations of source and effect are separated.**



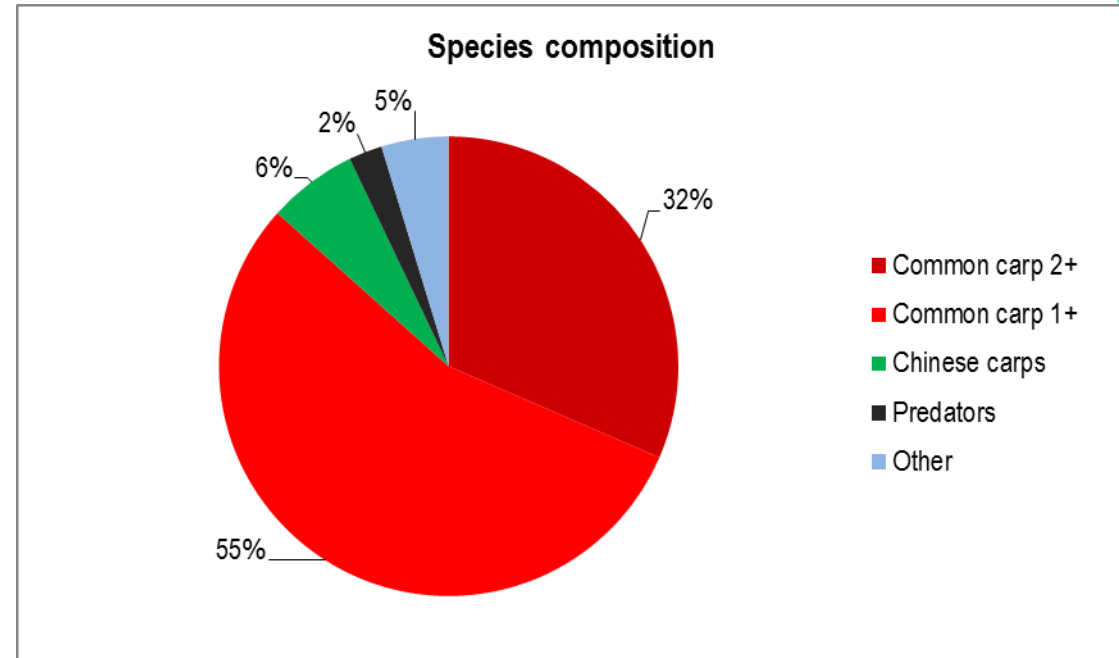
Source: MoA Dep. of Nature conservation

# Facts on Great Cormorant: Fish consumption

- The yearly fish consumption of Great cormorant calculating with 0.5 kg/day prey ca. 300,000 tones/year in Europe.
- The total European aquaculture production is 2,570,000 tones, while the freshwater aquaculture production is 360,000 tones/year.

! Significant losses in fish farms; complete termination of fish stocks expected without intervention.

! Significant damage to endangered fish populations in natural water bodies, particularly in winter time.



Source: Dudás & Halasi-Kovács 2000



# Legal framework of Great Cormorant in the EU law

- Great cormorant is protected under the European Wild Birds Directive 2009/147/EC, article 1.  
*„Directive relates to the conservation of all species of naturally occurring birds in the wild state in the European territory of the Member States”*
- Member States may derogate from the provisions by the article 9 of Directive.  
*„e.g. for the following reasons: to prevent serious damage to crops, livestock, forests, fisheries and water”*
- Measures by the derogation, specific requirements must be met in accordance with Article 9 (2) - (4).

**! Measures based on national/provincial regulation.**  
**! Measures based on derogation varies on wide range among member states.**



# Efforts with no result on EU level

- European Parliament resolution of 4 December 2008 on the **adoption of a European Cormorant Management Plan** to minimise the increasing impact of cormorants on fish stocks, fishing and aquaculture (2008/2177(INI)).
- Call on the Commission to take action to **reduce cormorant stocks** using all methods so that the survival of cormorant stocks is secured and no threat to other species is created and damage to the aquacultures concerned is averted. (*EP resolution (2018) on towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector, P8\_TA-PROV(2018)0248*).
- Call on the Commission to prepare a **proposal for an EU great cormorant management plan**. Highlights that the plan should include a list of eligible measures on preventive coexistence solutions and adequate compensation for losses and measures financed with EU or national funds. Urges the Commission to prepare, as an immediate action, a guidance document on how to apply derogations (*EP Resolution (2022) on striving for a sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture: the way forward (2021/2189(INI))*).

**Currently no comprehensive, Europe-wide Cormorant management frame, which could ensure the sustainable operation of EU aquaculture and could provide conservational practice the wild populations of threatened fish species.**

# Efforts on national level

- Tools to direct control of population size (Intercafe 2012b):
  - Shooting
  - Remove nests
  - Egg oiling
- Based on national regulation without coordination between breeding areas.
- Sporadic utilization.
- Applications are restricted both by regulation and technical conditions.

**The data and literatures prove that direct control of population is effective at local - water body – level, however effectiveness is low at European level, also may cause instability of different subpopulations.**



# Efforts on national level

- Tools to keep bird away from aquaculture facilities and fish (Intercafe 2012b):
  - Technological adaptation
  - Bird feeding ponds
  - Scaring with noise, light, drones
  - Shooting
  - Nets, wires on ponds
- Based on national regulation without coordination between water bodies.
- Wider application both fish farms and at natural waters with limited effectiveness in both time and space.
- Expensive solutions.

Combined applications of methods is essential to maintain production, however significant damage occurs even their utilization.



# FEAP Position

- **Needs an operative European Great Cormorant Management Plan.**
- **Maintaining the derogation is essential to sustain the EU aquaculture, even to protect the populations of threatened fish species, but the current practices are not a sufficient solution.**
- **Beside the long-term solution, needs an immediate action developing a guidance document on how to apply derogations, reducing the administrative burden, introducing a single, simple administrative procedure for applying the derogation tools.**
- **The cost of the control mechanisms should be financed through environmental protection and/or EU rural development funds. Compensation should be financed – especially in man-made infrastructures concerned – on the rule of „whoever protects then pays“.**
- **Stable, long term financial support for the improvement of effective protection measures, new technologies for automatic monitoring and early damage prevention.**

<https://feap.info/data-home/feap-positions/>



# Development of a Europe-wide Great Cormorant Management Plan

- Development of a European Great Cormorant Management Plan was initiated by EIFAAC.
- The project is financed by the Commission.
- The main stakeholder groups: aquaculture, fisheries, bird conservation, fish conservation.
- The scientific leaders of the project, internationally recognised researchers: Niels Jepsen and Ian Cowx.
- FEAP and European Anglers Alliance are active partners in the project collecting data and providing practice oriented, but evidence based technical advice to the project.
- **The 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of the Management Plan was published; comments are welcomed by 17<sup>th</sup> of June.**
- The final version will be submitted to the Commission for adoption in July.



# Development of a Europe-wide Great Cormorant Management Plan

## Overall goal: Balance and inclusiveness

- To achieve a fair balance between pan-European conservation of the great cormorant, with the sustainable use and protection of fish populations, fisheries and aquaculture interests, including the socio-economic well-being of communities dependent on fisheries and aquaculture.



# Components for a European Management Plan: Guiding Principles

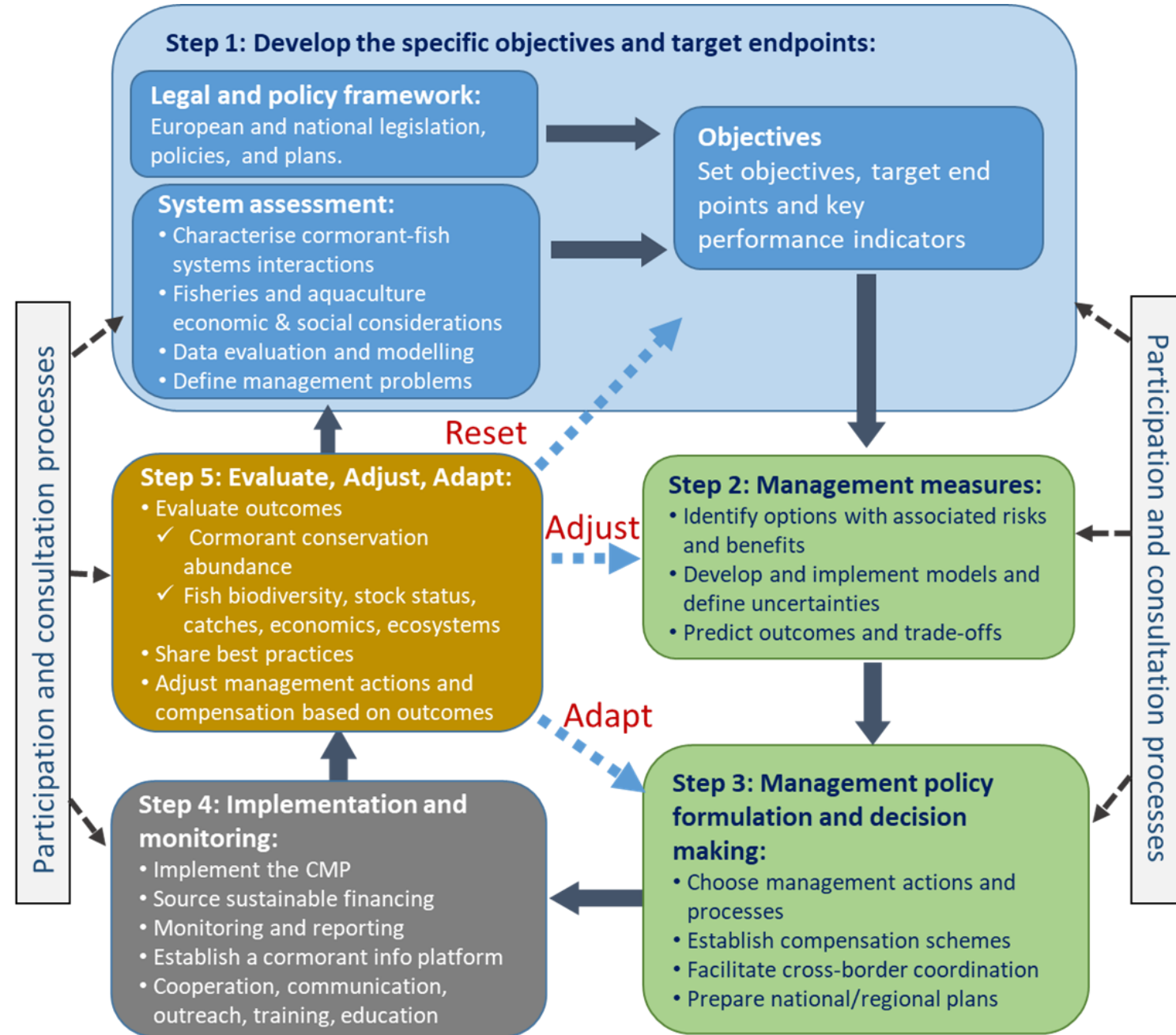
<b>Sustainability</b>	Ensure long-term coexistence of cormorants, fish populations and livelihoods.
<b>Evidence-based management</b>	Base decisions on robust scientific data.
<b>Adaptive management</b>	Use flexible and dynamic approaches to address evolving challenges, incorporating regular monitoring and stakeholder feedback.
<b>Collaboration and coordination</b>	Promote cooperation and continuous dialogue among European country agencies, NGOs and CSOs
<b>Compliance with legal frameworks</b>	Align management actions with EU directives and international treaties.
<b>Minimize conflicts</b>	Balance needs of birds, fisheries, aquaculture, biodiversity conservation.
<b>Precautionary approach</b>	Address potential risks proactively, avoiding unintended ecological or economic harm.
<b>Environmental stewardship</b>	Conduct management interventions in a responsible manner with care for the environment

# Components for a European Management Plan: Objectives

1. Maintain **up-to-date status and trend data** on cormorants, inland and coastal fisheries and aquaculture.
2. Improve understanding, documentation and **quantification of ecological, economic and social impacts of cormorants** on inland and coastal waters.
3. Provide a plan of action to **protect vulnerable fish species against predation** by cormorants, contributing to achievement of WFD, HD, Birds Directive and Bern Convention targets.
4. Adapt, update and **provide framework to implement measures to reduce and mitigate impact of cormorant predation on fisheries and aquaculture**.
5. Provide **framework to facilitate use of Article 9 derogations to authorise controlled culling of cormorants** whilst maintaining favourable conservation status.
6. Promote **cross-border collaboration** and harmonisation of monitoring, management, policy and legal frameworks.
7. Provide a central, **open-access, fully moderated platform** for engagement with all key stakeholders.

# Framework of the European Cormorant Management Plan

- Adopts the project management cycle.
- Process driven based on best available information.
- Balance needs of birds, fisheries, aquaculture and biodiversity.
- Adaptive, based on **Evaluate, Adjust and Adapt** procedure.
- Stakeholder participation and consultation at all stages.



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- P8\_TA-PROV (2018) 0248 European Parliament resolution of 12 June 2018 on towards a sustainable and competitive European aquaculture sector.
- European Wild Birds Directive 2009/147/EC

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