

**3rd meeting of the Steering Committee of
the Interregional Committee for Europe, North and Central Asia (ICENCA),
Tuesday 22nd February 2022**

Participants

Chris Mahon (United Kingdom) - Co-Chair, West Europe
Tamas Marghescu (Hungary) - Co-Chair, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Hans de longh (The Netherlands) - Vice Co-Chair, West Europe
Ann-Katrine Garn (Denmark) - Co-Secretary, West Europe
Ancuta Fedorca (Romania) - Co-Secretary, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Tamar Pataridze (Georgia) - Steering Group Member East Europe, North and Central Asia
Thomas Tennhardt (Germany) - Steering Group Member, West Europe
Anna Espadalé Gelis (Spain) - Steering Group Member, West Europe
Nida Al Fulaij (United Kingdom) - Steering Group Member, West Europe
Cécile Erny (France) - Steering Group Member, West Europe
Ruben Khachatryan (Armenia) - Steering Group Member, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Stiliyan Geraskov (Bulgaria) - Steering Group Member, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Roman Jashenko (Republic of Kazakhstan) - Steering Group Member, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Petko Tzvetkov (Bulgaria) - Steering Group Member, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Sonia Castañeda Rial (Spain IUCN Councillor West Europe (observer)
Vilmos Kizsel (Hungary) - IUCN Councillor East Europe, North and Central Asia (observer)
Constantine/Kostas Makris – IUCN Members Coordination Unit (observer)
Alberto Arroyo Schnell (Belgium) – IUCN Brussels (observer)
Boris Erg (Serbia) – IUCN Belgrade (observer)
Arantxa Cendoya (Spain) – IUCN Mediterranean (on behalf of Antonio Troya)
Peter Larsen (Switzerland) - Presenter
Shirin Karryeva (Turkmenistan) - Presenter
Jakhongir Talipov (Uzbekistan) - Presenter

Apologies

Divija Jata (Belgium) - Steering Group Member West Europe
Alexei Zavarzin (Russian Federation) - Vice Co-Chair, East Europe, North and Central Asia
Hilde Eggermont (Belgium) – IUCN Councillor West Europe (observer)
Maud Lelievre (France) - IUCN Councillor West Europe (observer)
Chantal van Ham (Belgium) – IUCN Brussels office (observer)
Antonio Troya (Spain) - IUCN Mediterranean office (observer)

1. Welcome from the Co-Chairs

Co-Chairs Chris and Tamas welcomed all to the 3rd meeting of the ICENCA and thanked Co-Secretaries Ancuta and Ann-Katrine who would deal with meeting's technical details and minutes. Chris reminded everyone that this is the Steering Committee and not the whole ICENCA which comprises all IUCN Members in Europe, North and Central Asia.

Chris encouraged everyone to write a few lines about themselves by way of introduction in the chat: Vice Co-Chair **Hans de longh** is currently Chair of the Leo Foundation and guest professor in Leiden and Antwerp. He has been involved with IUCN since 1990 as Chair IUCN NL, Regional Councillor for West Europe, member SC-SSC and member of several Commissions.

Boris Erg Director of IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO, Belgrade, Serbia).

Nida Al-Fulaij is Conservation Research Manager at the People's Trust for Endangered Species. Based in the UK, PTES fund research and conservation globally and in the UK.

Ann-Katrine Garn, based at Copenhagen Zoo, chair of the Danish IUCN National Committee and Co-Secretary of this group.

Tamar Pataridze, from Georgia, former member of IUCN Council (2 terms), currently working for regional trust fund -Caucasus Nature Fund, working with the Protected Areas in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Arantxa Cendoya, Membership focal point for Spain and North Africa, IUCN-Med

Sonia Castañeda Rial, IUCN Councillor. Also sent greetings from Hilde and Maud, colleagues at the Council who couldn't attend the meeting. They are the 3 Councillors elected from the Regions for Western Europe
Anna Espadalé working in the Government of Catalonia (Spain) in Environmental Service Planning - in regional biodiversity strategies, protection plans of Natural Parks, environmental laws, international policies, and many other interesting projects.

Vilmos KISZEL from Hungary, Chair of Göncöl and IUCN Councillor for East Europe, North and Central Asia

Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Head of Policy and Programme, IUCN European Regional Office.

Roman Jashenko Director General of Institute of Zoology CS MES RK, Chairman of the Kazakhstan National Committee for the UNESCO Program "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB), member of the National Commission of Republic of Kazakhstan on UNESCO and ISESCO, president of the Tethys Scientific Society. Main scientific subject is zoology (systematics, fauna, lifestyle and zoogeography of scale insects; ecology; general zoology; entomology; biological control of harmful plants; zoological linguistics; natural dyes; biodiversity conservation; theory and practice on specially protected natural territories and Red Data Book, etc.).

Stiliyan Geraskov expert in Union of Hunters and Anglers in Bulgaria (UHAB). In the last years actively engaged in expert groups related to migratory birds, large carnivores, protected areas, agriculture, forestry, and implementation of EU nature policy.

Petko Tzvetkov, Green Belt & Natura 2000 Coordinator of the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, Board member of the European Green Belt Association, Chairman of the BALKANI Wildlife Society. Main interests: ecological connectivity, management of Protected areas and Natura 2000 sites, stakeholders' involvement. Scientific interests: ornithology, favourable conservation status of species and habitat types, marine habitats restoration.

Jakhongir Talipov - State Ecology Committee, Uzbekistan. Greetings from Tashkent. Happy to join today's meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved with one reservation. One minor change in item 12. Sentence to be removed as it doesn't make sense.

3. Matters and actions arising from the previous meeting

Action 1 **Translation** SO and AAS to assist CM and AKG with systems for translation.

Not progressed.

Action 2 **Statutes** CM and AKG to contact the Secretariat and IUCN legal advisor.

Has gone to the Secretariat.

Action 3 **Regional Director** AAS to communicate the situation on the ROFE Director.

Will be covered later in the meeting.

Action 4 **Logo** SO to look into an IUCN logo for ICENCA.

Will depend on Council accepting and approving the existing of ICENCA.

4. Update on ICENCA formal recognition by IUCN Council

Waiting to hear from Council. Request has gone to the Governance & Constituency Committee.

5. Update on Commission representation on ICENCA

The format on how to do this is being discussed by the Global Group for National and Regional Committee Development. An Excel spreadsheet matrix is in progress for each of the Commissions and Regional Committees to fill in.

6. Regional representation on the Global Group for National and Regional Committee Development

Chris explained that there currently is no regional representative from East Europe, North and Central Asia on this Global Group. So, this is an opportunity for someone to volunteer. The GG meets 4 times a year. Ann-Katrine added that CENN from Georgia had represented the region before. Tamar continued that it should be a someone who has experience with Committees. Chris added that it could also be someone from a country which aspires to have a National Committee - there is no better place to learn. Could also be a Country Focal Point. The main thing is interest, connection, and ambition. It's a communication position. Any expression of interest?

An overview from the region was discussed and Boris was asked to provide information to this. Alberto started by thanking especially Chris and Ann-Katrine for their persistence and, for doing the Excel overview. He highlighted that the overview is nearly there, and Boris could work with that.

Roman intervened with the situation in Central Asia. In the past 10-20 years ago, the region was active in IUCN. Especially around the Aman Congress when there were seven Members in IUCN from Kazakhstan. Unfortunately, there is now only 1 Member. Roman would like to increase the membership and is negotiating with the relevant Ministry. So, the situation is not so good for membership right now but he hopes this can be improved. It is a focal time for Central Asia as the scientific society has some resources.

Chris added that this is encouraging news. Is there anything we can do to help/support?

Boris followed and asked Roman if he would consider promoting the idea of a sub-Regional Committee in Central Asia? There are seven members in Central Asia altogether. Roman is not sure that now is time to organize a sub-Regional Committee because of low regional activity by Members. Tamas also congratulated Roman for his inspiring intervention and the plans ahead, repeating the offer of help?

Chris concluded saying that the next meeting of the Global Group will be on 23rd March. Chris confirmed that it will take time for a regional representative to be found and we need to do some work on the Excel overview including the role description of a country focal point as requested by Boris.

Action 1 All to consider nominations for a regional representative on the Global Group for East Europe, North and Central Asia.

Action 2 WGNCD to develop a role description for a Country Focal Point.

7. Getting to know our regions – towards a strategy and work programme

It's nice to have this Committee operating especially as we have a large number of Members in the two regions. There are 56 countries in the ICENCA area with a considerable proportion of the IUCN community. We should therefore take the next year for getting to know the area and each other. The ambition for us is for the more established to support the less established, like a buddy system to those who wish to form stronger connections within IUCN. We should identify some potential for actions. The idea of getting Country Focal Points identified is a good start and we should also get to know each other better individually. Chris suggested that we should work towards a strategy and a work plan and maybe consider creating a sub-group to do this.

Nida followed, asking what are the restrictions? Maybe costs and lack of opportunity? Chris thanked for the suggestion. We should start identifying the opportunities.

Action 3 All to consider the benefits of a strategy and work programme sub-group and to put forward nominations as appropriate.

8. Presentation by Peter Larsen, University of Geneva, on 'Civic spaces'

Peter provided a PowerPoint presentation which provided evidence demonstrating an increase in pressure placed on NGOs and individual environmental activists (see attachment with these minutes). Nida observed that these issues were resonating with her over situations facing many of her partners in PTES. Sonia and Tamar followed with thanks for this very interesting presentation. Hans continued that this is very relevant and asked whether this should be covered by IUCN Council?

Tamas also thanked Peter for his presentation but considered that it needs a lot more analysis as there is a lot of general statements. IUCN should be a member's organisation, but IUCN need to earn their daily bread. Vilmos followed with this initiative being very brave and timely. About the Council, it's on their agenda for the coming Council meeting as an issue to address and it has already been discussed in the Finance Standing Committee.

Petko emphasised that his organisation supports these findings, also, reminding that the European region is also consisting of relatively new EU Member States. They have the same problems which are not simply with governments ignoring NGOs. These could motivate or demotivate members. It is not simply to say 'become Members'. What we have to do is justify and show that IUCN is active.

Chris concluded that there is more work to do on this. We should come back to it in the next meeting. There is a need for a collective effort.

Action 4 to consider further activity on this subject intersessionally and return to it at the next ICENCA meeting in May.

9. Presentation by Jakhongir Talipov, Head of International Cooperation and Projects Department, State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection, Republic of Uzbekistan

Jakhongir was warmly welcomed and his comprehensive presentation on nature conservation activity in Uzbekistan (see attachment with these minutes) was well received. Boris highlighted this as a very good example on how a state authority is advancing with nature conservation.

10. Update by a representative Councillor elected from each of the two regions

Sonia first thanked Hilde, one of the 4 new IUCN Vice-Presidents, on her notes to report. The IUCN Council met in the middle of February 2022 with the following 15 outcomes as a result:

I. Council, Commissions and Secretariat - 7 outcomes:

- The 3 Standing Committees have been established.
- Bureau has also been established.
- Steering committees of the Commissions now fully approved.
- Council agreed on a process for implementing Resolution 110 of the 2021 Congress on the Establishment of the Climate Crisis Commission (CCC).
 - Secretariat, Appointment of Legal Advisor deferred to May meeting.
 - Council appointed the Advisory Group for the Revision of the Statutes, in line with Decision 148. Based on GCC recommendation.
 - Workplan 2022 & Budget approved, following several comments by PPC & FAC.

II. Strategy and the work ahead, 5 outcomes:

- Treasurer highlighting the need for long-term financial planning (alongside the 20-year strategic vision = WCC 2020 Decision 147) with clear goals & in-depth analysis of financial risks.
- Council discussed its Strategic Objectives.
- Director General Strategic Objectives. Will be re-tabled on the agenda of May.
- IUCN's positions papers in COP

III. And finally

- Commission can be more involved.
- 19 new Members were approved.
- Membership dues issues - problems were acknowledged, this issue will be tackled again in May.
- Next Congress will be in 2025.

Vilmos followed with highlighting that this Council will be the best ever. The President led the meeting well. The most important decision was the Climate Crisis Commission, building an interim solution and a road map on how to achieve this. The Membership fee issue was a hot topic, warning that IUCN will lose members if we continue in this way. And we have to remember that the Council is there for giving strategy advice. Chris concluded that it is good to hear that we have a positive Council with good leadership.

11. Presentation by Shirin Karryeva, Project Manager, "Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI) – Conservation and sustainable use of deserts in Turkmenistan"

Chris thanked Shirin for giving her excellent presentation (see attachment with these minutes) which was another great contribution towards getting more familiar with each other and countries in the interregional area.

12. Update by Regional Offices, including Member's activities – Brussels, Belgrade, Malaga

IUCN EURO, Brussels

Alberto emphasised that the office is mainly based on policy issues and with a strong engagement with the EU. Working with the Members, Alberto highlighted the overview which the Spanish National Committee had done with motions and the European programme. It can be helpful to do this in future opportunities. The

presentation of the Marseille Congress to the European Parliament was also highlighted. Registration to the virtual event presenting IUCN WCC relevant results for the EU is here: <https://ebcd.org/events/online-event-iucn-world-conservation-congress-what-does-it-mean-for-europe/>. There is no news on the position of the Regional Director other than it is being re-advertised.

IUCN Mediterranean, Malaga

Arantxa highlighted the work by the Spanish NC based on the IUCN Global Programme. The Mediterranean and North African Programme is also aligned with the Global Programme, now sent to partners and Members for comments and information. Last November they renewed the contract for four more years. Developing a binding agreement so continuation of the Med-Centre can be secured. Working on strengthening the collaboration with the 3 Regional Offices. Finally, they are celebrating the Med-Centre's 20th anniversary this year.

IUCN ECARO, Belgrade

Boris was happy to see Shirin's presentation and that this coming through as regional collaboration that is working. Regarding tensions around Ukraine the Belgrade office is in contact with the one Member. The office is still scaling up, with one important thing in the western Balkans. Teaming up with a number of Members in the western Balkans in policy shaping as part of the EU green deal. Thank you for the Excel overview which will help work more on State Members and also with where there are no Members. Also, there currently is no membership officer. Kostas is working alone supporting a vast Membership. There is a proposal to strengthening the position.

Chris underlined that the report to ICENCA from the Regional Offices is really appreciated. It's a two-way process and it's good to help deliver some synergy.

13. Collection of information on nature recovery initiatives

This item is on the agenda as Chris attended a conference with the IUCN DG on post-Covid nature recovery and wasn't able to report on behalf of the region as we didn't have any data collated. The DG would like to devolve responsibility for this to the regions so it will fall on the regional offices and members to feed in on that process.

Action 5 All to consider a methodology for acquiring such information from Members

14. Suggestions for the location for the 1st ICENCA Members Assembly

Chris reminded to please remember that this is the ICENCA Steering Committee and that ICENCA is all the Members in the two regions. It would be good to have an in-person assembly, or even a virtual one. This is for ongoing consideration. If we have an in-person Members Assembly, it should perhaps be in a host country where it is needed to have a greater IUCN profile or presence but also needs to be in a place able to provide support for the meeting (financial and technical). Please go away and think whether your country fits the bill, or maybe we could consider combining it with the Regional Conservation Forum.

Action 6 All to consider hosting potential for the 1st ICENCA Members Assembly and to send nominations to the ICENCA Secretariat.

15. Any other business

A paper inviting signatories was circulated prior to the meeting on the Poland/Belarus border fence issue as an open letter to the European Commission. Tamas mentioned that we need some guidance on whether IUCN should take a position on this. The paper is about the scientific community endorsing it.

Boris explained that he had had a lot of exchanges through the Transboundary Specialist Group, but no position was taken. There is not enough information so what are we aiming at? It would be good to get some guidance on what type of position we should take. It is not the only fence issue. There are lots of fences being built up around the region. Tamas to re-remind the DG of the intervention and request for guidance.

Action 7 Alberto and Boris to check with DG Office why there has been no response. Tamas to forward his email to the DG to them.

Vilmos highlighted that the Members Engagement Fund has been raised in the Finance Committee. This is for common projects under the IUCN and for Regional Offices and Members to apply to the fund. Vilmos has presented a simple model on how to do this.

Tamas followed that this is a very important issue. How much of the core funding is spent in the 2 regions for membership work? As a membership organisation IUCN needs to put more emphasis on the work of Members in his view.

Boris reminded everyone about the publication “Back to the roots of IUCN” – an updated version of that might be useful.

16. Date of next meeting

Tuesdays at 10:00 CET on the following dates during 2022:

24th May

23rd August

22nd November

Chris ended the meeting. We shall meet again with news and invitation to join activities. Thank you for your patience, support and participation. It has been a fascinating meeting.