



Sustainable
Eel Group

The Sustainable *Eel* Group

Monitoring and Evaluation System

Monitoring & Evaluation System

Versions Issued

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1. Purpose

This document describes the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system for the Sustainable Eel Group (SEG). The M&E system defines the short to long term outcomes and impacts that are expected from implementing SEG's strategies, including the SEG standard. It includes how those will be measured and will provide learning feedback for improving our strategies.

The M&E system also helps to demonstrate to stakeholders the changes intended by SEG and how SEG contributes to stated impacts.

2. Applicability and responsibility

This system is for SEG use. A summary version, a public statement, is published on our website in the page SEG Standard System on our website: www.sustainableeelgroup.org for transparency and public scrutiny. Those using and applying it are responsible for ensuring they use the latest version.

3. The Sustainable Eel Group - our purpose

The European eel population has declined significantly and is now classified by the IUCN as 'critically endangered'. It was once much more common and widely spread across its range from North Africa, through Europe and up to Scandinavia, and supported fishing, associated trade and livelihoods.

The reduced population is a risk to the species itself, wildlife and ecosystems and the socio-economics of communities that fish for, trade in and eat eel.

Our primary purpose is for the recovery of the European eel, with multiple benefits to the ecosystems, communities, traditions and economies that rely on it.

The Sustainable Eel Group (SEG) is the leading international collaboration of scientists, conservation groups, the commercial sector and advisors, dedicated to the recovery of the European eel. We are a not-for-profit, non-government organisation (NGO), with offices in the United Kingdom and Brussels and with collaborators from across Europe and beyond. Our influence must be Europe-wide to help the European eel, which is a single, mixed, genetically similar, panmictic stock.

Our Vision

Healthy wild eel populations distributed throughout their natural range fulfilling their role in the aquatic environment and supporting sustainable use for the benefit of communities, local economies and traditions.

Our Mission

To provide the respected leadership alliance that enables and promotes the joined-up conservation and management of the eel in the Member States of Europe and across the eel's range, linking all interests in an open and effective process to achieve SEG's Vision.

These are explained in more detail, with the strategies designed to achieve them, in our [Theory of Change](#).

Our work and strategies are designed to support the recovery of the European eel, and the European Commission's 'Eel Regulation ([Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1100/2007](#)). The primary objective of this Regulation is, as described in Article 1, '*the protection and sustainable use of the stock of European eel*'.

The SEG standard, one of our principal strategies, has been developed and designed as a code of conduct for best practice in the commercial eel sector, to support the recovery of the European eel and the to meet the objectives of the Eel Regulation.

4. M&E System Requirements

4.1 Scope and Boundaries of the M&E System (ISEAL checklist reference 5.2.1)

Aims and objectives

The overarching framework of the scope of SEG is captured in the Theory of Change and the M&E system is described in more detail in section 6. That framework supports the following **principal objectives**:

- To monitor the health (quantity) of the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla* L.) across its natural range in Europe, North Africa and Scandinavia.
- To monitor the status of socio-economic aspects of those business and countries that fish for and trade in European eel.
- To monitor the direct and indirect effects that SEG's activities have on the eel's population and the sector.
- To reduce the illegal trade of eels
- To monitor the health of aquatic ecosystems working closely with Wetlands International European Association

The intended **impacts of SEG's work** are:

- The recovery of the eel population to 'healthy and biological safe levels' across its range
- such that it can play its part in aquatic ecosystems
- and support sustainable use for the benefit of communities, local economies and traditions

The core **strategies of SEG**, to achieve these objectives are a robust and credible standard, advocacy and sound science.

The **aims of the SEG standard** are to:

- Promote best practice in the commercial eel sector
- Enable the commercial eel sector to demonstrate how, by adopting best practice, they can make a 'positive contribution' to the eel population
- Provide an assured traceable supply of 'responsibly sourced' eel, from fishery to consumer
- Provide the consumer with the choice to purchase responsibly sourced eel
- Reduce the illegal trade of eels
- Stimulate wetland restoration and the unblocking of migration pathways

Geographical scope

Although the European eel has a lifecycle across continents, seas and the Atlantic Ocean, SEG's M&E system will be limited to Europe at this stage. This is where data and information are best known and where, via the European Commission and our network, our activities have influence.

Information and influence in the eel's range in North Africa is limited, and SEG will develop that as and when we can.

SEG is also sharing best practice and information with those involved with other Anguillid eel species around the world, in particular, the east coast American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), and in Asia, the Japanese eel (*Anguilla japonica*). As a small organisation, there are no current plans to extend the M&E system to those species and places, though authorities there might adapt the SEG system for future use.

Sustainability Aspects

The core focus of the M&E system will be:

Environmental impacts:

- Glass eel and silver eel populations
- Health of aquatic ecosystems

Economic aspects:

- The value of the eel sector
- The value of the certified portion of the sector
- Size of illegal trade

Social aspects:

- Employment in the sector (in each the certified and uncertified portions)
- Maintaining traditional forms of fishing
- Maintaining traditional forms of eating eel

Performance of the SEG standard

- Proportion of the sector achieving the standard
- Proportion of eels traded that are certified 'responsibly sourced'

See Annex 1 for details on actual indicators. For most of the above sustainability areas, we will use quantitative data. For example, the WGEEL 'Glass Eel Recruitment Index' as an indication of Glass eel recruitment; total value of sales in the sector; employment levels.

Some data will be qualitative. For example, we will observe whether traditional forms of fishing and eating eel are being maintained, but we won't measure the quantities or value of eel being fished or eaten there.

4.2 Resources

SEG has identified and allocated the following resources to implement and maintain a streamlined and robust Monitoring and Evaluation system.

4.2.1 Personnel (ISEAL checklist references 5.4.1, 5.5.1)

Director of Conservation Operations (David Bunt)

This role and person has been the primary author and project manager for development and implementation of the SEG standard and supporting materials. David has attended ISEAL workshops to gain relevant knowledge and has main responsibility for the M&E system. David has a BSc. in Environmental Biology, MSc. in Aquatic Resource Management, Diploma in Fisheries Management and is a Chartered Environmentalist. He has worked in fisheries, environmental and business management since 1987. The estimated time budgeted is 10% of time, i.e. 2 days per month.

Director of Scientific Operations (Florian Stein)

This role and person will be the primary collator of data and information to support the M&E system. Sources of data will be from, for example, the annual reports by ICES WGEEL (International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, Working Group on Eel, glass eel market surveys and trade data as well as records about trafficking from enforcement agencies. Since 2009, Florian managed several eel studies for research institutions in Germany and Sweden. From 2015 he has been investigating glass eel trafficking in close collaboration with research institutions and enforcement agencies in Europe and Asia as well as CITES. Florian has a German Diploma (equivalent to Master's degree) in Geography (major) and Biology (minor). The estimated time budgeted is 10% of time, i.e. 2 days per month.

External Support

As a small organisation, SEG will periodically use external consultants for specific expertise. There has been extensive support from ISEAL experienced consultants, in particular, OneWorldStandards (Matthew Wenban-Smith) and Liseed Consulting (Aimee Russillo).

4.2.2 Funding (ISEAL checklist reference 5.4.1)

The development of the SEG standard and supporting materials such as this M&E System has been funded by SEG with support from a multi-year European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) grant.

The SEG Board agreed at its meeting on 30 May 2018 to allocate sufficient budget for these staff and services for at least the next three years, securing the resources for building and maintaining the SEG M&E system. The personnel costs from the above are calculated as £19,200 per annum for the M&E system. A budget for SEG is under development, and this will include and identify allocations for this M&E system.

If either of these staff leave SEG, new recruits or other contacts will be allocated to undertake these roles, and / or consultants with experience of ISEAL M&E systems will be appointed.

4.2.3 Roles and Responsibilities (ISEAL checklist reference 5.5.1)

The roles and responsibilities of the M&E system staff are described in more detail:

Director of Conservation Operations (David Bunt)

- This role has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the M&E system. This includes:
 - Design and development of the system
 - Gaining input and approval from the SEG Board
 - In future versions, gaining input from stakeholders
 - Ensuring the resources (people and funding) are in place for to measure and report progress
 - Approving progress reports before publication

Director of Scientific Operations (Florian Stein)

- This role has responsibility for collating data and reporting progress with the M&E system. This includes:
 - Collating data and information from different sources
 - Checking or seeking assurance for their accuracy
 - Preparing and publishing reports

4.3 Data Confidentiality and Use (ISEAL checklist ref. 5.7.1 and 5.7.2)

Much of the data and information required for the M&E system will come directly from clients, or indirectly via the Certification Body. SEG staff will therefore be in possession of commercially sensitive data and information from individual businesses. Data and information security is described in the SEG [Data Security Policy](#).

To summarise how information will be securely handled:

- When seeking information from clients they shall be advised that it will be treated according to our Data Security Policy (with a link to the policy provided)
- All data on individual clients shall be treated as confidential ('commercial in confidence')
- Data shall be held in password protected folders on the computers of the staff named above, with back-up on cloud-based folders, again password protected.
- Permission shall be sought to publish any data or information that is specific to the client. For example, SEG will publish client audit reports, but as they often contain commercially sensitive information, SEG shall agree with the client what information can remain and what should be removed for publication. Data from clients will be used to aggregate into total figures to monitor and report trends across the sector, e.g. *The number and % of businesses in each part of the sector achieving the SEG standard*. It will not be possible from those reports to identify data from individuals.

5. Stakeholder Engagement

5.1 Stakeholder Identification

A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken and documented in 2016. It is maintained in an Excel spreadsheet and currently has 860 contacts.

5.2 Stakeholder engagement

This list was used to keep those 860 stakeholders informed by email about news and progress with SEG activities. It was used to consult on the review of the SEG standard in 2017. In June 2017 a workshop on London was used to consult on the standard in person. Part of that workshop focused on the M&E elements to solicit and gather input and feedback.

The standard (and the final version published) contained the proposed measures and targets for the M&E system, so those 860 stakeholders were consulted on that over two consultation periods in 2017. SEG received a number of comments in relation to those measures and they are published on the SEG website.

As part of the continuous improvement process, feedback from stakeholders will be sought on reports published in order to consider how improvements to the measures and the reporting system shall be made.

5.3 Contact point for submission of comments or complaints about M&E

Stakeholders can send comments directly to M&E staff via email, or answer surveys designed to obtain feedback on specific reports.

For comments about the SEG M&E system, stakeholders can contact: standard@sustainableeelgroup.org

Any complaints about the SEG standard system, to include this M&E system, if they are unresolved after contacting the email address above, should be addressed to the SEG Chairman at: info@sustainableeelgroup.org.

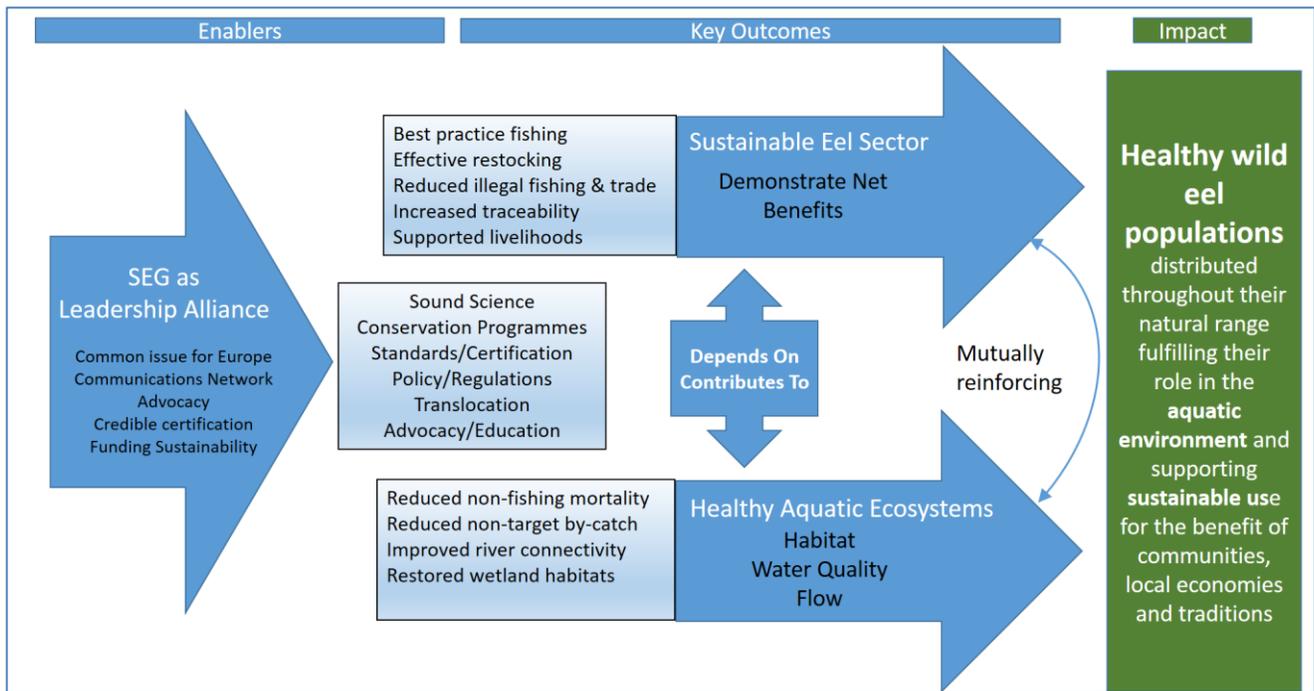
6. Defining the Intended Change

Our Theory of change describes the change SEG intends to achieve through its various strategies and interventions. It is summarised in the diagram below and subsequent narrative.

6.1 Intended Impacts (long term) (ISEAL checklist ref. 7.1.1)

The long term impacts are, as described in the green box in the [Theory of Change](#) diagram below:

Healthy wild eel populations distributed throughout their natural range fulfilling their role in the aquatic environment and supporting sustainable use for the benefit of communities, local economies and traditions.



6.1 Intended Impacts (long term)

The intended long term impacts are described in more detail here. Targets and measures are provided in section 7.

Healthy wild eel populations distributed throughout their natural range

We wish to see the quantities of Glass eel returning to Europe’s rivers and wetlands increasing to previously abundant levels, yellow eels common throughout their natural range, and good returns of silver eels to the sea to spawn and perpetuate the population.

Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems

It has taken centuries of industrialisation to block, degrade and pollute our ecosystems. So, it will take a long time and huge financial and political investment to return them to anything like natural. Our strategies include supporting, influencing and maximising the efforts to unblock migratory pathways, both up and downstream, to minimise entrainment in pumps and to restore wetlands in order to maximise the habitat available and the productivity of the eel. We wish to see more kilometres of river opened up, more wetlands accessible, more wetlands restored, more pumping stations with better protection against entrainment.

Sustainable use for the benefit of thriving local communities, economies and traditions

Eels have been eaten and traded by man for centuries. Countries and local communities have developed unique relationships and cultures around catching and eating eels. As eel populations have declined, as market forces have pushed prices up, those traditions have declined. Our strategies, in particular adoption of the SEG standard, are to develop sustainable use of the eel population, such that it can recover and maintain both cultures and incomes for communities and play its role in the aquatic habitat.

6.2 Intended Outcomes (short and medium term) (ISEAL checklist ref. 7.1.2)

The intended short and medium term outcomes we expect to see as a result of compliance with the standard and through our other strategies are described in more detail here. Targets and measures are provided in section 7

Best practice fishing

SEG has developed and improved the SEG standard to define, encourage and assess that eel fishing practices meet the best possible standards. Individual assessments will identify how well individual fisheries and traders are meeting those standards.

Our next challenge is to market and promote the standard such that more of the sector wishes to take it up and fewer wish to engage in non-certified or even illegal activities. So, some of the performance indicators and targets are to test the take-up of the standard and associated best practices.

Illegal trade reduced

The illegal trade (to Asia) of eels is currently estimated at 100 tonnes per year (300 million fish), and 25% of the natural stock. As a significant threat to the viability of the species, and to legitimate legal businesses and livelihoods, SEG is pursuing a series of strategies to tackle and reduce the illegal trade.

SEG has access to data and information to indicate the scale of the illegal trade. We will report those and will hope to see year-on-year reductions over the coming years.

Effective restocking

The EC Eel Regulation requires that 60% of all Glass eels caught are used for restocking. In 2017 only 21% of those reported as caught were restocked, and this doesn't include those illegally caught and not reported. The SEG standard is designed to require those certified to make their contribution to the 60%. So, this is included to measure our and others' achievement of this important eel management strategy.

Accredited credibility of SEG strategies and standard

It is important to SEG to be seen as credible, and to be independently accredited as such. As the world-leading independent accreditation body for sustainability standards, SEG regards the ISEAL Alliance as the most suitable evaluator. SEG is seeking ISEAL Associate Membership in 2018 and Full Membership in 2019.

Increased traceability

Traceability is another key objective of the EC Eel Regulation. The aim is to adopt better traceability systems so that fewer might be lost via the illegal trade. The SEG standard requires traceability so that traders can demonstrate where their eels originated and that they are from certified sources. This will help to tackle the illegal trade.

Eel conservation programmes

In recognition of the eel's status, there has been significant investment in eel conservation programmes since the introduction of the EC Eel Regulation in 2007. One of SEG's strategies is to enable the implementation of a greater number of more effective projects to help the eel's recovery. SEG will monitor those under its direct influence.

6.3 Enablers

The 'Enablers' in the Theory of Change are described in more detail:

Publication of a substantially revised SEG standard

Over two consultation exercises it enabled intensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders which (1) created a better quality standard and (2) influenced more organisations that a sustainable eel sector is possible. The new [standard](#) was published in June 2018.

Membership of ISEAL

Gaining ISEAL membership has (1) caused SEG to consider our aims and strategies more carefully and (2) has shown, even through the application and preparation process, that it will provide independent credibility for our aims, objectives and strategies.

NGO endorsement

To be effective, we need the support of a wide range of organisations, so that objectives can be aligned and we can spend our individual and collective time, effort and budgets on strategies that will help the eel. Partnership and collaborative projects will be more successful and we will be more effective at gaining grant funding. So, we are working in partnership, networking, having a strong social media presence, seeking ISEAL membership and demonstrating that we are seeking a science and conservation-based, sustainable future for the eel. These area strategies that are enabling increasingly greater support from a wide range of NGOs, governments, universities and other organisations.

Advocacy and influencing government policies

To be effective, we also need to be able to influence European Commission and national government policies that affect the aquatic environment and the eel. Since forming, our credibility has built, perhaps because we have shown ourselves to be an objective and balanced collaboration of scientists, conservationists and the commercial sector. We have increasingly made representations and views on eel and aquatic policies and legislation to national governments and their agencies, and to EC fisheries and environmental committees and MEPs. We have been influential in gaining sustainable outcomes for the eel and in 2018 we were invited by the European Council to contribute to their substantial review of the Eel Regulation in 2018 and 2019.

6.4 SEG Standard Performance Indicators

Measures, targets and intended outcomes are described in Section 13, 'Measures' in the SEG Standard, published from the web-page '[SEG Standard](#)'. This was published in June 2018 and underwent a number of iterations during the consultation process from February 2017 to June 2018. The measures are included in Section 7, below.

6.5 Unintended effects

It is challenging to predict the unintended effects of a successful programme. The following are initial identified possibilities.

- Demand for consumption of certified eel might become greater than the market can supply, putting up prices or putting pressure on stocks?
- Cost of participation (assessment and certification) may be a barrier for some
- Legitimate, responsible fishing may increase the 'cover' for illegal fishing and, causing trafficking to increase further
- Some fisheries or practices may not be able to meet the standard and they may feel the only option is to sell to uncertified or even illegal markets

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Key performance indicators

Annex 1 (a separate document – [linked here](#)) lists the key performance indicators we currently intend to collate. This will be done for the first time in 2018 to create a baseline on which to base future reports. We will work with our partners in the sector and the Certification Bodies to collect these data in the most effective and efficient ways and to learn which indicators are meaningful and worth continuing to collate and report.

8. Learning and Improving

SEG will produce and publish our first baseline report in 2018. SEG intends to learn and improve from this first publication and then annually as follows:

- The most efficient and effective processes and mechanisms to collect the data
- The most useful and informative data to collect and report
- The most informative and accessible ways to present the reports

SEG will seek feedback from partners, stakeholders, contributors and our own experiences to gain and implement the learning.

9. Transparency and Public Information

9.1 Publicly Available Information

Our M&E System Public Statement is published in the SEG website page [SEG Standard System](#). The M&E Public statement includes:

- the contact point for submission of any comments, questions or complaints about the M&E system
- a description of the current scope and boundaries of the monitoring and evaluation system
- an explanation of the scheme's strategies, intended outcomes and impacts, and the most significant unintended effects
- a link to a list of all indicators being used in the monitoring and evaluation system

- a link to and examples of completed, ongoing and planned outcome and impact evaluations
- procedures and opportunities for stakeholder engagement in the design and revision of the M&E system and the results of these consultations

This M&E System and other SEG Standard system documents are published on the SEG website at [SEG Standard System](#).

Performance reports will be produced annually and published by SEG on its website at [Evaluation Reports](#). They will go through a data quality control check and be peer-reviewed internally before publication.

The first report, in 2018 will be a baseline report from which future changes can be measured. This will be published and SEG will invite comments from stakeholders on the suitability of these as indicators in our M&E System.

SEG also publishes a [Public Statement](#) to indicate how the M&E system will operate.

Certification Body audit reports and certificates of those certified can be accessed from the SEG Standard Register, which is accessible from the web-page [Holders of the SEG Standard](#).

9.2 Transparency of Evaluations

As the SEG standard is outcome based, the annual performance monitoring report will be an outcome evaluation of the standard. Those reports will be made publicly available (see above).

Summaries of all outcome and impact evaluations will be published on the SEG website under [Evaluation Reports](#) and where possible, all full reports as well.

SEG currently provides a centralised resource for scientific studies on the SEG website with full reports at: <http://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/conservation-scientific-publications/>

SEG has also commissioned and produced a number of its own papers to understand the eel sector better. Examples are:

- [Evaluation of eel stocking across Europe and recommendations for improvement](#)
- [Quantifying the illegal trade in European glass eels \(*Anguilla anguilla*\): Evidences and Indicators](#)

Future evaluation reports will be published on the SEG website. Examples of those currently under way are:

- Determining the potential of otolith and tissue microchemistry for the traceability of glass eels
- Trial Implementation of a tele-declaration system to reach full traceability of the UK glass eel fisheries
- Brue Valley Eel Improvement Project
- European eel *Anguilla anguilla* distribution, passage and habitat use in a whole river catchment in North Norfolk, UK
- Bristol Fish Project: A people and place-based approach to eels and communities in the Bristol Channel



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