

## EU needs to build on progress to protect the European Eel

**Brussels, 03 December 2018.** In an effort to step up regulatory action to protect and enhance the recovery of the European Eel, EU Fisheries Ministers adopted in December 2017 a Joint Declaration to improve the implementation of their Eel Management Plans, to review Restocking practices and to fight Illegal Fishing and Trade. Specifically, for the Atlantic and Baltic, a temporary emergency measure was adopted, closing marine fisheries on adult eel during three consecutive months in winter 2017/2018.

The Sustainable Eel Group (SEG) shares the Council's concern for increased effectiveness in the management of the European eel. However, any potential review of the above measures at the 17-18 December Fisheries Council should be considered in the context that restoration of the European eel stocks requires a far broader approach than just fisheries to address the current inadequate implementation of the EU's Eel Regulation.

SEG welcomes the increased ambition of the Council's Joint Declaration of December 2017. However, the Council's agreed emergency measure (three-months ban on marine eel fisheries in the Atlantic and Baltic) will on its own not achieve a recovery of the stock. Therefore, the EU's focus must remain on establishing a comprehensive, stakeholder-involved, sustainable management regime across the distribution area of the eel, i.e. one in which **all human impacts** are comprehensively addressed (fisheries both commercial and recreational, habitat loss, migration barriers, turbine mortalities et al).

Now, in early winter 2018/2019, SEG notes further important steps of progress that:

- a.** The Commission's evaluation of the EU Eel Regulation is in progress and results are foreseen in spring 2019  
(see [ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-1986447\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-1986447_en));
- b.** Member States have reported their self-assessments in summer 2018, and these are now being evaluated (see, for instance: *WGEEL Report 2018*);
- c.** Control of illegal fisheries and trade has been intensified, uncovering even more trafficking of glass eel to eastern Asia, in what is now considered as one of the world's largest wildlife crimes (see [www.sustainableeelgroup.org/trafficking-updates/](http://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/trafficking-updates/));
- d.** Considerable progress has been made in initiating an eel protection framework in the Mediterranean (see [www.fao.org/gfcm/reports/technical-meetings/detail/en/c/1142115/](http://www.fao.org/gfcm/reports/technical-meetings/detail/en/c/1142115/)).

SEG considers the 2018 achievements, though not completed yet, as indicative of a major increase in ambition for the European eel's recovery. Hence, SEG looks forward to engaging in further progress in EU policy during 2019, when the establishment of a permanent and sustainable management regime for the eel, as envisaged by the EU's Eel Regulation, needs to be urgently fulfilled.

### CONTACT

Andrew Kerr (Chairman)  
Phone: + 44 (0) 7887 993924  
Email: [a.kerr@SustainableEelGroup.org](mailto:a.kerr@SustainableEelGroup.org)  
Web: [www.SustainableEelGroup.org](http://www.SustainableEelGroup.org)