

Region Under Threat:
Arctic Waters, North Sea, Celtic
Seas, Bay of Biscay and Iberian
Coast

Species: European Eel

OSPAR Recommendation 2014/15:

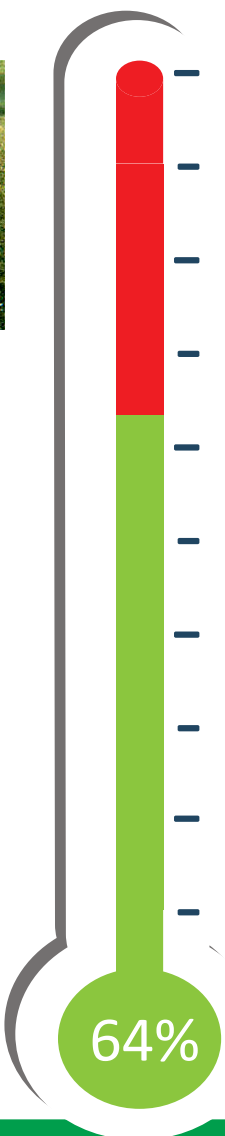
Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect the European eel include eel management plans, specific fisheries measures, including control of illegal fisheries, and scientific research on mortality



Description

European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) life history is complex and unusual. It spawns in the eastern part of the Sargasso Sea so the distribution of eels on their spawning migration extends all the way from northern Europe across the Atlantic Ocean and down to the Sargasso Sea. The newly hatched larvae drift with the Gulf Stream and the North Atlantic Current to the continental shelf of Europe where they metamorphose into glass eels that enter continental waters at an age of approximately 1-2 years. Glass eels then settle in estuaries or migrate further up in the river basin before they become yellow eels settling for 2-25 years (or even 50 years) prior to maturation and metamorphosis to the silver eel stage.



Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. Recent examples include:

1. There are fisheries regulations in France, Sweden, Norway, and the UK;
2. Eel management plans have been implemented by Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the UK;
3. Measures have been introduced to improve access to critical habitat in Sweden, the Netherlands, and the UK;
4. France has implemented scientific programs to reduce mortality;
5. Measures to control and restrain illegal fisheries and illegal trade have been introduced by France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK;
6. In Germany, Spain, and the UK traceability documentation is required;
7. There are monitoring systems in France, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here for more information on the index.

Condition

Eel stocks are at an historical minimum in most of the distribution area and continue to decline. Fishing and other anthropogenic mortalities are thought to be high both on juvenile (glass eel) and older eels (yellow and silver eels). However the overall status of the eel stock is poorly known. Neither the absolute size nor the overall impact of exploitation and other anthropogenic factors have been reliably assessed.



References:
Background Document for European eel (OSPAR Publication 479)
OSPAR Recommendation 2014/15
OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)