

## **European Species Initiative Helsinki Workshop Minutes**

**Date:** September 16, 2023

**Location:** EAZA Annual Conference, Helsinki

**Facilitator:** Andrea Bračko

### **Part 1: introduction to the European Species Initiative and Zoo Projects**

The workshop started with an introduction to the European Species Initiative, outlining its goals. Examples of conservation projects were presented:

- Beetle-mania at Copenhagen Zoo - Signe Ellegaard, Copenhagen Zoo
- Conservation breeding program for *Mauremys rivulata* as support of wild population in Croatia - Dragica Šalamon, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Agriculture
- Establishment and operation of a conservation breeding facility for Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) at Leipzig Zoo - Ariel Jacken

### **Part 2: Discussion on the European Species Conservation Starter Kit:**

The Starter Kit aims to empower European zoos in their conservation efforts.

Participants provided feedback on the proposed content, focusing on tailoring information to suit the needs of zoos beginning the conservation journey.

Due to time constraints, not all parts of the kit were discussed extensively, but remarks were gathered on various aspects.

#### **Feedback on Introduction to European Species Conservation:**

- Participants stressed the importance of clearly stating reasons for zoo involvement in conservation efforts, emphasizing their roles as centres for education, research, and conservation.
- Suggestions were made to include case studies of successful conservation projects to provide practical guidance for institutions, particularly those new to conservation efforts.
- Utilizing existing networks and creating a comprehensive list of common do's and don'ts in conservation practices were recommended.
- Strategies for collaboration between zoos, including the establishment of online platforms and leveraging existing databases, were proposed.
- Participants emphasized the importance of conducting thorough investigations and research before initiating conservation projects, particularly concerning the impact of reintroduced species on ecosystems.
- It was suggested to adopt a positive approach in the wording of conservation challenges, highlighting opportunities to integrate nature into urban landscapes.

#### **Feedback on Identifying Priority Species:**

- Challenges in creating a definitive list of priority species were highlighted due to the diversity of national lists and databases.
- Recommendations included prioritization criteria based on conservation needs and feasibility for ex situ husbandry
- Recommendations were made to develop guidelines or decision trees guidelines for selecting priority species tailored to individual zoo contexts, considering factors like local ecological importance and feasibility.

#### **Feedback on Conservation Strategies:**

- Participants recommended incorporating citizen science as a valuable tool in conservation efforts, emphasizing the importance of proper management and evaluation.

- Suggestions were made to compile a list of individuals experienced in specific aspects of conservation and provide tools for partner matching.
- It was noted that the involvement of stakeholders beyond zoos, such as local communities and authorities, is essential for successful conservation initiatives.

**Feedback on Conservation Planning and Implementation:**

- Participants proposed the inclusion of a step-by-step guide for project initiation and adaptation, as well as strategies for long-term project sustainability through adaptive management.
- Recommendations were made to provide examples and checklists for developing conservation plans tailored to zoo resources and goals.

**Feedback on Fundraising and Grant Opportunities:**

- Suggestions included providing comprehensive guidelines for fundraising and grant application processes, as well as strategies for convincing zoo management of the importance of conservation funding.
- Participants recommended exploring various funding sources, including foundations and European Union programs, and providing practical ideas for engaging with funding organizations.

**Feedback on Engaging Stakeholders and Building Partnerships:**

- Emphasizing the importance of collaboration and partnerships, participants suggested identifying potential partners and strategies for engaging with local authorities and NGOs.
- Recommendations included showcasing zoos as local conservation players and emphasizing the need for connections with local authorities.

**Next Steps:**

All feedback, ideas, and suggestions gathered during the workshop will be used to refine and expand the European Species Conservation Starter Kit.

Action items were identified, including incorporating clear reasons for zoo involvement, developing guidelines for species prioritization, and providing resources for stakeholder engagement and fundraising. Plans were made to address some of these items in an upcoming workshop at the Conservation Forum in Ostrava.