The European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC): Its role in Reconciling Fisheries with Conservation in Times of Change in Europe

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1. Who – or what – is EIFAC?

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1. Who is EIFAC?

The European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission
EIFAC is a statutory body of the

It is a regional fisheries commission of FAO according to Article VI of the FAO Constitution, serving as the centre of a network, linking policy-makers, managers, scientists and others working on inland fisheries and aquaculture issues.
1. Who is EIFAC?

EIFAC = European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission

- focus on inland waters (freshwater)
- purely advisory function towards member states
- no regulatory power!
- no budget for activities —> on charge of members
- based largely on voluntary work
2. The structure of EIFAC

Executive Committee

Secretariat at FAO HQ

Sub-Commission I «Biology and Management»
Sub-Commission II «Aquaculture»
Sub-Commission III «Protection of the Aquatic Resource»
Sub-Commission IV «Social and Economic Issues»

Working groups:
- Eels
- Fish monitoring in fresh waters
- Introductions and stocking
- Maps of fish distribution & aquatic habitat quality
- Management of sturgeon

Working groups:
- Fish diseases and their control
- Aquatic resources management in aquaculture
- Organic fish farming
- Market perspectives of European freshwater aquaculture (with EC)

Working groups:
- Physical habitat modification
- Rehabilitation of lakes & reservoirs
- Prevention/control of bird predation
- Management practices & the environment
- Handling of fishes in fisheries and aquaculture

Working groups:
- Recreational fisheries
- Social and economic aspects of inland fisheries
34 members (states with national correspondent), including the European Commission. Regular cooperation with scientists from North America, Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia.
3. How EIFAC works

1. A **Plenary Session** of the Commission is held every two years (→ **session report** available online).
   In conjunction with session:
   **Scientific symposium**. Symposium proceedings published as books or special issues of scientific journals.

2. Between sessions, most work of the Commission is carried out by the **working groups** (in meetings, by correspondence).
   Main **products**: Reports, Technical and Occasional Papers (available online), and scientific publications, all made available to EIFAC members and others by FAO.

3. **Networking**: contacts and exchange of information among scientists, managers, administrators.
4. The role of EIFAC in reconciling fisheries with conservation

Primary field of activity of EIFAC:
European inland fisheries and aquaculture: resource use

In recent years, *conservation aspects* have become more and more important when providing advice to member states.

Specifically, with the political and economic changes in (Eastern) Europe, the need to reconcile fisheries with *conservation* is becoming urgent:

- Often poor state of aquatic habitats due to rapid and/or uncontrolled industrial development
- Certain fish populations also threatened by overexploitation
- Freshwater aquaculture is rapidly developing → need for environmentally sound and sustainable development
4. The role of EIFAC in reconciling fisheries with conservation: some examples

Example 1: Eel

Catches (stocks) of the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) have dropped to an alarmingly low state in recent years.

→ Appropriate measures are pressing.

The joint **EIFAC/ICES working party on Eel** tries to find ways for improving the state of the stocks, and to help formulating and implementing a management plan to:

• safeguard the species in the long term (conservation),

• promote the sustainable fisheries of this highly valued resource.
Example 1: Eel

Landing statistics of the European eel in the past 50 years.

Example 2: Sturgeon

The **working party on Management of sturgeon** works jointly with the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

- to assess the state of the sturgeon stocks in the Danube, Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Adriatic Sea regions,
- to help protecting sturgeons from illegal capture and exportation,
- to review existing conservation and management measures, and
- to advise on appropriate interventions for the sustainable exploitation of the stocks (CITES requirement!), including stock enhancement through aquaculture production and stocking.
Example 3: Bird predation

EIFAC working party on Prevention and control of bird predation: Cooperation with European ornithological and fisheries organisations.

Focus on effects of cormorants (mergansers) on inland fisheries and aquaculture, and on (endangered) fish stocks on a pan-European scale

→ conflict between birds and fish of different conservation status;
→ European cormorant management plan?
→ strong need for reconciling fisheries interests with conservation.
Example 4: Rehabilitation of rivers for fish

EIFAC working party on Effects of Physical Modification of the Aquatic Habitat on Fish Populations:
Produced a manual on river rehabilitation for fish (practical advice)

—> example for the commitment and involvement of EIFAC to restore and enhance the ecological basis of fish production;

—> example for reconciling fisheries with conservation.