



LIFE Project Number
LIFE17 GIE/NL/000599

Final Report
Covering the project activities from 01/09/2018¹ to 31/10/2022

Reporting Date²
31/01/2023

**Delivering the EU Biodiversity Strategy: Awareness and Capacity Building
against Bird Crime in Priority Flyway Countries - LIFE Against Bird Crime**

Data Project

Project location:	Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy
Project start date:	01/09/2018
Project end date:	28/02/2022 Extension date: 31/10/2022
Total budget:	€ 1,827,689
EU contribution:	€ 1,088,026
(%) of eligible costs:	59.86%

Data Beneficiary

Name Beneficiary:	Stichting BirdLife Europe
Contact person:	Dr. Lilla Barabas
Postal address:	c/o Hive5, Cours Saint-Michel 30/B, Brussels, B-1040
Telephone:	+ 32 493 090209
E-mail:	lilla.barabas@birdlife.org
Project Website:	https://flightforsurvival.org/life-against-bird-crimes/

¹ Project start date

² Include the reporting date as foreseen in part C2 of Annex II of the Grant Agreement

Package completeness and correctness check	
Obligatory elements	✓ or N/A
Technical report	
The correct latest template for the type of project (e.g. traditional) has been followed and all sections have been filled in, in English <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
Index of deliverables with short description annexed, in English <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓ page 61
<u>Mid-term report</u> : Deliverables due in the reporting period (from project start) annexed <u>Final report</u> : Deliverables not already submitted with the MTR annexed including the Layman's report and after-LIFE plan Deliverables in language(s) other than English include a summary in English <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
Financial report	
The reporting period in the financial report (consolidated financial statement and financial statement of each Individual Beneficiary) is the same as in the technical report with the exception of any terminated beneficiary for which the end period should be the date of the termination.	✓
Consolidated Financial Statement with all 5 forms duly filled in and signed and dated <i>Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed and dated originals* and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel file)</i>	✓
Financial Statement(s) of the Coordinating Beneficiary, of each Associated Beneficiary and of each affiliate (if involved), with all forms duly filled in (signed and dated). The Financial Statement(s) of Beneficiaries with affiliate(s) include the total cost of each affiliate in 1 line per cost category's <i>In electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel files) + in the case of the Final report the overall summary forms of each beneficiary electronically Q-signed or if paper submission, signed and dated originals*</i>	✓
Amounts, names and other data (e.g. bank account) are correct and consistent with the Grant Agreement / across the different forms (e.g. figures from the individual statements are the same as those reported in the consolidated statement)	✓
Mid-term report (for all projects except IPs): the threshold for the second pre-financing payment has been reached	N/A
Beneficiary's certificate for Durable Goods included (if required, i.e. beneficiaries claiming 100% cost for durable goods) <i>Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed and dated originals* and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets)</i>	N/A
Certificate on financial statements (if required, i.e. for beneficiaries with EU contribution ≥750,000 € in the budget) <i>Electronically Q-signed or if paper submission signed original and in electronic version (pdf)</i>	N/A
Other checks	
Additional information / clarifications and supporting documents requested in previous EASME letters (unless already submitted or not yet due) <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓
This table, page 2 of the Mid-term / Final report, is completed - each tick box is filled in <i>In electronic version only</i>	✓

**signature by a legal or statutory representative of the beneficiary / affiliate concerned*

1. Table of contents

- 1. Table of contents..... 3
- 2. List of key-words and abbreviations 4
- 3. Executive Summary (max. 2 pages)..... 5
- 4. Introduction (max. 2 pages)..... 7
- 5. Administrative part (max. 1 page) 9
- 6. Technical part (max. 25 pages)..... 10
 - 6.1 Technical progress, per Action..... 10
 - 6.1.1 A. Preparatory actions 10
 - 6.1.2 B. Core actions 14
 - 6.1.3 C. Monitoring of project impact 25
 - 6.1.4 D. Communication and dissemination of the project and its results..... 27
 - 6.1.5 E. Project management..... 30
 - 6.2 Main deviations, problems and corrective actions implemented 32
 - 6.3 Evaluation of Project Implementation 33
 - 6.4 Analysis of benefits..... 47
 - 6.4.2 Economic benefits..... 49
 - 6.4.3 Social benefits 49
- 7 Key Project-level Indicators..... 54
- 8 Comments on the financial report 56
 - 8.1 Summary of Costs Incurred 56
 - 8.2 Accounting system..... 57
 - 8.3 Partnership arrangements..... 59
 - 8.4 Certificate on the financial statement 59
 - 8.5 Estimation of person-days used per action..... 59
- Index of deliverables..... 61

2. List of key-words and abbreviations

ARU: Automated (Sound) Recording Unit
BLECA: BirdLife Europe and Central Asia
BLCy: BirdLife Cyprus
BLI: BirdLife International
CINEA: European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
CMS: Convention on migratory species, Bonn Convention
COVID-19: Coronavirus disease
CUFA: Carabinieri Forestry, Environmental and Agri-Food Unit Command
EASME: Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
ECD: Environmental Crime Directive
ENPE: European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment
ESBA: Eastern Sovereign Base Area (Cyprus)
EUFJE: European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment
FACE: European Federation for Hunting and Conservation
FRI: Forest Research Institute in Greece
HOS: Hellenic Ornithological Society (BirdLife Greece)
IKB: Illegal killing and taking of birds
IMPEL: European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law
ISPRA: Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale/ National System for Environmental Protection in Italy
LABC: LIFE against Bird Crime project
LAP: local action plan against IKB (Greece)
LEAs: law enforcement agencies
LIFE NG: LIFE Nature Guardians LIFE17 GIE/ES/000630
LIPU: Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli/BirdLife Italy
MIKT: Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean
MoE: Ministry of Environment / Ministry of Energy and Environment
MS: Member State
NAP: National Action Plan against IKB
PA: Partnership Agreement
PM: Project management
RSP: Rome Strategic Plan 2020 – 2030: Eradicating Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade in Wild Birds in Europe and the Mediterranean region
RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds / BirdLife UK
SEO: Spanish Ornithological Society/BirdLife Spain
VCF: Vulture Conservation Foundation
WWF: World Wide Fund for Nature

3. Executive Summary (max. 2 pages)

Direct conservation actions

The LIFE “Awareness and Capacity Building against Bird Crime in Priority Flyway Countries” (LIFE Against bird crime) project has aimed to improve public knowledge on illegal killing of birds (IKB) and raise national capacities for tackling IKB in the project countries, thus resulting in a reduction in number of birds being illegally killed. The major on-site conservation results that the project achieved were:

1. Significant reduction in illegal bird trapping, particularly within the Dhekelia Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) in Cyprus (-90%! compared to 2015-16 baseline).
2. Using the Acoustic Recording Units (ARUs) as an innovative tool to record illegal hunting for the very first time in Greece
3. Successful inclusion of volunteers in monitoring and detecting poaching in the project countries
4. Poaching hide removals at the Natura 2000 site “Dravske akumulacije” in Croatia
5. Operation ‘Recall’ which is a cooperative action by Lipu volunteer guards and CUFA (the special branch of Carabinieri dealing with wildlife crimes) against the illicit use of electronic call and recorders for hunting of larks and thrushes. During the project period (2018-2021) the operation resulted in a total of 680 checks, with 132 administrative cases, 77 crime cases with 71 persons reported to judicial authorities.
6. Police raids being conducted at the notorious open market of Schisto in Greece (with frequent illegal trade of native wild birds), after repetitive reports of HOS. Significant numbers of wild birds were confiscated and released back into the wild. Following these coordinated efforts, the amplitude of the trade has decreased.

Overall, our monitoring data shows on average a reduction of 25-30% in IKB normalized by the efforts. This is a great achievement and a conservation success, resulting in the saving of hundreds of thousands of migratory birds. The changes in the trends however cannot be solely attributed to the project’s efforts, as many non-monitored factors have had measurable impact both positive (e.g. decreased hunting tourism in Croatia during the pandemic) and negative (e.g. law relaxation in Cyprus).

Originally the project foresaw to develop an operational EU-level bird crime database. Unfortunately, it has become clear that the consortium doesn’t have the resources to secure the adequate data collection from the national data managing entities, nor to maintain the database in the long-term. Therefore, we have developed detailed recommendations for the database without creating it. The database recommendation report was presented at the CMS MIKT meeting in 2022.

Policy impact

Our international policy goals are aligned with the CMS MIKT process. In 2019, the project partnership actively participated in the development of the Rome Strategic Plan (2020-2030). The RSP requires contracting governments to scale up their efforts to achieve at least 50% reduction in IKB within their national territories by 2030 (over a 2020 baseline) aiming ultimately at the eradication of IKB. The national partners put pressure on government officials to actively participate in the MIKT procedures and submit the scoreboard assessments. The scoreboard assessment is a voluntarily self-evaluation process from the governments, but it’s a cooperative

effort with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as national BirdLife NGOs. As a result of our activity, all four project countries submitted their scoreboards for the [second assessment](#) (2020-21). During the first assessment (2018), Cyprus didn't submit their report. The project also organized an online workshop on the 8-9 March 2021 regarding the development of a National Action Plan. A direct outcome of this workshop was a relevant guidance document developed by the LABC project partners, which was shared with the MIKT coordinator and [was included](#) in the materials of the CMS MIKT meeting held on 9-11 June 2021.

All beneficiaries have systematically and repeatedly lobbied government officials and relevant authorities on taking drastic action against IKB at national levels. However, one of the biggest barriers we had to face during the implementation of the project was the lack of political will at ministry level. National Action Plans exist in Italy and Cyprus, but their implementation hasn't been satisfactory. LIPU and BirdLife Cyprus ran petitions to improve the situation and handed them over with many signatures, but the demands have been ignored. In Greece and Croatia, HOS and BIOM advocated for the adoption of a National Action Plan but could not achieve these deliverables, due to inactivity and negligence of the ministries.

The main national policy successes were:

1. Common quail shooting season was shortened for 20 days, as direct result of BIOM's advocacy campaign "Black August" ran in September 2019. The poaching strictly connected to the shooting season; thus it's estimated that this has decrease IKB in Croatia by approx. 20.000 fewer quails illegally shot per year.
2. In Greece, Local Action Plans (LAPs) against the illegal killing of birds (mainly focused on Turtle dove) were endorsed and are being activated every spring in the Ionian Islands

As EU-pressure has been often proven more successful than pressure from NGOs, the project partnership also called out for international help on several occasions (EC letters by LIPU and BL Cyprus (jointly with other NGOs), submission of a Strategic Complaint by HOS).

Communication and dissemination activities

For its major awareness raising campaign, called "Flight for Survival", the project took a less conventional path by communicating primarily about the threat to birds and the solutions, rather than on the project activities. This approach was very successful and has resulted in very high reaches that exceeded even our own expectations. Beyond the project partnership, the campaign involved other BirdLife organizations along the flyway to extend its impact further. At national levels, we also used TV and radio spots, bus stop posters, info boards, airport screens, wall murals, photo exhibitions, event stands and information kiosks to convey our message to the public.

The majority of our educational activities targeted school children and educators on the project areas (IKB blackspots). During 2020 and partly in 2021, the Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible the organize the educational activities in schools, but with the project extension we were able to reach more than 7500 students. As a result, the youngest generations will be empowered to change the traditions that remain deeply embedded in their communities' way of life and family lifestyles through knowledge. We also produced educational materials (e.g. comic book, bird ID guide, police brochure, leaflets etc.) that have contributed to our narrative and will continue to serve this purpose in the after-LIFE period.

Changing perceptions and behaviours of people is a slow process, but it is the most important investment for achieving long-term results.

4. Introduction (max. 2 pages)

Environmental problem/issue addressed

The illegal killing of birds (IKB) is defined as any form of deliberate action that results in the death or removal from the wild of an individual bird (regardless of whether it was the target of this action or not), that is prohibited under national legislation. Many birds that breed in Northern and Western Europe as well as in Central Asia fly southwards to spend their winters in Africa, the Middle East or Southern Europe. In spring, they return north to the breeding grounds. These migrations are perilous, as large-scale illegal killing takes place across the flyway, in both spring and autumn, every year. BirdLife International exposed the illegal mass slaughter of migratory birds across the Mediterranean ([Brochet et al. 2016](#)), Northern Europe and the Caucasus ([Brochet et al. 2017](#)) and Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf ([Brochet et al. 2019](#)). Every year, just in the Mediterranean region an average of 25,000,000 birds are unlawfully shot, trapped, or poisoned.

Baseline situation

The baseline data are derived from the above-mentioned publication of Brochet *et al.* 2016. This study – titled “*Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean*” – used a diverse range of data sources and leaned on expert knowledge where systematic monitoring on IKB is not prevalent. The project partnership includes four national BirdLife partners from the top five EU countries with the most illegally killed individual birds estimated per year. These four partner countries together are responsible for approximately 36% of the total IKB in the entire Mediterranean region.

Top 5 EU countries with most IKB in the Mediterranean	Mean no. bird killed
Italy	5,611,459
Cyprus	2,296,976
Greece	703,525
France	521,928
Croatia	510,441

Outline of the information/communication strategy

The project’s information strategy has three pillars.

1. The first is the overall public awareness raising. It serves the following purposes:
 - to keep the topic on the national and international agendas, raising more focus on the severity of the threat to migratory birds and a public demand for tackling the issue
 - to help public reporting and thus higher detection rate in bird crime cases
 - to support a fundraising element (which was financed from a complementary project). Partners will use these donations to implement smaller, local IKB-related pilot initiatives (identified in Action B7).

2. Second, the specific stakeholder strategy. We developed four distinct communication strategies to address “end-user” groups in the project countries (addressed in Action B4)
3. Third is the information exchange with professionals working in diminishing IKB. This includes communication via specialized channels, such as BirdLife International’s “BirdLife – The Magazine”, our IKB newsletter, IKB-specific Facebook groups and contacts with Secretariats of MEAs and the European Commission.

Stakeholders targeted

In Action B4 the project partners have identified special stakeholder groups and developed more detailed strategies to influence and communicate the problem of illegal killing to them. These stakeholder groups were targeted through the so-called demonstration projects, developed in Action B5. As these activities focused on changing attitude toward long-established traditions, partners mostly targeted the younger generation, specifically elementary school pupils and high school students.

Other special stakeholders are conservation professionals, governmental officers, and actors in the IKB enforcement chain (rangers, police, prosecutors, judges etc.). The information exchange with them is mainly channelled through the policy and networking actions (B1, B3, B6 and D3).

Monitoring of the project impact and the socio-economic context

Due to the specific differences among targeted groups and activities, we decided to design separate socio-economic studies and focused on small-scale, qualitative review of the perceived impacts on a selection of stakeholder groups and target-areas with the support from academics and external experts in public opinion poll surveys. Detailed findings are annexed.

Expected longer term results

The project partnership played a crucial role in strengthening the Rome Strategic Plan. The Bern Convention Standing Committee adopted the RSP in December 2019 and the MIKT members endorsed the same version during the summer 2020. This has a significant impact on the IKB policies, especially in the Mediterranean countries. Partners have been supporting governments to comply with requirements outlined in the RSP and we believe that this work will continue to bear fruits after the project has ended.

In the medium-term the increased awareness and the knowledge-sharing will result in tackling IKB more efficiently, addressing the problem and freeing up resources that can be invested in tackling illegal killing elsewhere. In the long-term, the change of attitude of the younger generation toward IKB can result in freeing up enforcement resources permanently and can contribute to better addressing drivers and other preventive approaches.

5. Administrative part (max. 1 page)

The project partnership consists of (as was envisaged in the proposal originally):

- Coordinating beneficiary (CB): Stichting BirdLife Europe (BirdLife Europe and Central Asia)
- Associated beneficiaries (AB): Association BIOM, BirdLife Cyprus, BirdLife International, Hellenic Ornithological Society, Lipu (Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli)

All associated beneficiaries had a unique important role, and each brought added value to the project partnership. The Coordinating Beneficiary (BLECA) employed a full-time project coordinator (Lilla Barabas). Each of the associated beneficiaries nominated a project coordinator employee, who communicated with CB's project coordinator. Altogether, the partnership had amounted to 12.72 full time equivalent personnel. Over the 4-year of the implementation period, the project had 66 employees working fully or partly on the project's actions for shorter or longer periods.

The supervision of the project management and the quality of its implementation was assured by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consisted of at least one representative of each project beneficiaries, typically the conservation director or the director, and the project coordinators were also involved. Steering Committee (SC) meetings were held bi-annually (in-person or online); we held 8 SC meetings over the course of the project.

All partners prepared written monthly progress report to the PM. A joint progress report was regularly e-mailed by the PM to the external monitor (An Bollen, NEEMO) each month. The communication with the external monitor was very good. The project had yearly monitoring visits (11/2018, 03/2020, 06/2021-joint monitoring mission with CINEA project advisor, 05/2022).

Beneficiaries also prepared annual budget plans and quarterly financial reports to the CB. We used Microsoft Teams to collect both the financial reports and all supporting documents in an electronic format.

We submitted the following reports to EASME/CINEA previously: First Progress report (30/11/2019), Mid-term Report (28/07/2020), Second Progress Report (26/11/2021).

On 01/09/2021, we requested that the duration of the project be extended with 8 months, thus running until 31/10/2022. Our request was approved, thus constituting Amendment No. 1 to the Grant Agreement.

6. Technical part (max. 25 pages)

6.1 Technical progress, per Action

Note: We added some extra evidence as annexed deliverables that were not required strictly by the original project proposal. These voluntary annexes are indicated with Italics.

6.1.1 A. Preparatory actions

A.1 Develop standardized monitoring procedure and protocols to enable regional monitoring of the scope and scale of illegal killing

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	30/09/2022	Actual end date:	15/10/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A1. A best practice guide for monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds (<i>3rd edition – updated in 2022</i>)			

Monitoring methodology

The partnership held an International Workshop on IKB Monitoring in Madrid, between June 27-29, 2019. [MTR-Annex A1.2] The NGO representatives participating at the Monitoring part of the workshop established the “Watchdog NGO Network” [MTR-Annex A1.3] This list has been continuously updated and used for sharing IKB-related information. BirdLife International developed and published a study on the best practices in 2015. This ‘Best practice guide for monitoring illegal killing of birds’ was completed and updated with new technologies and new recommendations first during the workshop [MTR-Annex A1.1], later the 3rd edition with 3 new case studies [Annex A1]. This updated “[Best practice guidelines](#)” is published on the project’s website and was presented at the technical webinar on monitoring hosted by CMS for governmental officers (19/09/2022).

Monitoring activities

HOS carried out passive acoustic monitoring to detect spring hunting activities on the Ionian islands. (The use of automated sound recorders was not foreseen in the original project proposal but was approved by EASME after the first Progress Report.) In spring 2021 and 2022, HOS installed 10 recording units on six Ionian islands. The detected shots confirm the presence of rampant illegal spring hunting and has been used as supporting evidence for the HOS complaint submitted to the EC under Action B3. HOS plans to repeat this same monitoring activity again in 4-5 years.

BIOM developed a protocol on monitoring the use of illegal electronic calling devices and has employed it under Action B2, using volunteers during autumn hunting seasons.

LIPU and BirdLife Cyprus have already had on-going, long-term monitoring activities in place. BirdLife Cyprus have been running a surveillance program on illegal bird trapping since 2002. LIPU takes part in anti-poaching operations every year since 2016, in Rome province, in collaboration with law enforcement authorities. Complementary to this activity (funded from another project) in

September 2022, LIPU created a database for the collection of data of all anti-poaching activities conducted by its volunteers in Italy. The intention in the future is to extend this data collection to other NGOs in order to have a single common database.

Long-term surveillance also resulted in poachers being more alert to the operations. Challenges emerge from them applying countermeasures and techniques to avoid getting caught e.g. wearing masks, use of metal detectors to find and remove hidden cameras.

Thanks to these monitoring programs, we are able to provide reliable overview of the IKB situation, which is very important for enforcement, lobbying and communication. Majority of these monitoring activities will be continued after the end of the project. HOS plans to repeat the spring shot monitoring on the Ionian islands in 4-5 years (dependent on funding).

A.2 Design the structure and functionalities of an EU-wide bird-crime database and protocols for NGO / MEA / EU communication

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/03/2022	Actual end date:	31/05/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A2.1. Overview study of existing bird crime databases • A2.2. Recommendation report for an EU-level Bird Crime Database 			
Deliverables not reached:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database with IKB seizures and offences, compatible with IMPEL-ESIX and national databases, with accompanying summary of the data and database structure and protocols 			

The first milestone of this action was the organization of the expert group meeting on bird crime databases in Mechelen (20-21/11/2019). The invited 18 experts, who work with different wildlife crime databases, identified the major aims and the ideal structure of an EU-wide database.

There are many already existing national/regional/international databases related to bird crime. To have a good overview of what data are available and how these databases are structured, BLECA contracted a consultant to carry out the mapping exercise of existing databases and to write detailed recommendations for an EU-level bird crime database. (This change from the original A2 deliverable was requested and subsequently approved in the MTR).

The first consultant (UGOCO) compiled an extensive contact list and carried out a survey to overview existing national bird crime databases [Annex A2.1]. The second consultant (STRIX) wrote the feasibility report, including technical recommendations and a budget analysis for the development and maintenance of such database [Annex A2.2]. The report was published on the project’s website and shared with relevant stakeholders, including presentation at the international conference on “Reinforcement of capacities for Wildlife Crime Law Enforcement Bodies” organized by the LIFE Nature Guardians project (21-23/06/2022) and MIKT5 meeting in Valencia, hosted by CMS MIKT and Bern Convention (7-9/06/2022).

A.3 Establish National Priorities and Framework Template for National Strategic Action Plans

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A3.1. Format for National Action Plans for addressing IKB • A3.2. Local Action Plan for the Ionian Islands, Greece (HOS) • A3.3 <i>Joint NGO letter to EC concerning non-compliance with NAP implementation of the Italian government</i> • A3.4 <i>NAP process in Croatia (BIOM)</i> • A3.5 <i>EC response letter to the joint Italian NGO letter</i> 			
Deliverables not reached:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Action Plan/National Priority Document for IKB in Croatia/Greece 			

Subaction A.3.1 International workshop and National Action Plan template for NGOs

This action and its associated processes for the development of action plans was originally planned to kick-off with an international workshop organised by the beneficiary responsible for the action (BirdLife Cyprus), with the support from the other LIFE partners. It was foreseen to take place in Larnaca, Cyprus on the 10-11 March 2020, but was postponed due to the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak. A year later, BirdLife Cyprus organized the "International Workshop on National Action Plan (NAP) to fight against IKB" online (8-9/03/2021), where 83 participants from 31 countries participated, and produced the suggested template for the NAP [Annex A3.1]. This NAP template and guidance was shared with CMS & Bern Convention Secretariats to further facilitate the development of the NAP process for the governments and was included as one of the background documents for the MIKT4 meeting.

Subaction A.3.2 National Priorities or Strategic National Action Plan in Greece and Croatia

In Greece:

There has been no political will from the national government's side to adopt a National Action Plan from the beginning. Therefore, HOS focused its work on the Local Action Plans (LAP). The purpose of the LAPs is to coordinate efforts of local authorities (National Park Management Authorities, Hunting Federation, Forest Service and Police) and other stakeholders (municipality) to reduce spring IKB in the Ionian islands. HOS had meetings with the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy (MoE) and local authorities to discuss LAPs. After many meetings with the central and local competent authorities, fruitful dialogue, collaboration, and constant pressure, Local Action Plans (LAPs) against the illegal killing of birds (mainly focused on Turtle dove) were endorsed formally by the authorities and are being activated every spring in the Ionian Islands [Annex A3.2].

Although this is a clear success to have achieved the adoption of the LAP on the Ionian islands, when it comes to implementation, the MoE along with the local Forestry Service have delayed it every year and never evaluated the results, nor reviewed them. HOS included the issues

with the implementation of the LAP in the Strategic complaint to the EC. Hopefully, this complaint will lead to pressure from EC towards the country, and consequently the country will take action.

In Croatia:

BIOM initiated the process of developing and adopting a National Action Plan against IKB, involving the State Inspectorate (SI), Ministry of Environment and Energy / later the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoE-Directorate for Nature Protection), and NGOs back in 2019. The process halted during the pandemic, then by parliamentary elections in 2021. BIOM’s project policy officer repeatedly urged SI and MoE through meetings and formal letters, while the two institutions kept pointing at each other. In 2021, the Inspectorate officially sent a letter to BIOM and to the MoE, that they did not consider themselves to be responsible for the development and adoption of the NAP.

On 12/04/2022, Biom, jointly with WWF Adria, organized a meeting with representatives of all key stakeholders important for the development of the NAP: there were representatives of Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (Focal Point for Bern Convention), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior, Croatian State Inspectorate, wildlife forensic experts (Croatian Veterinary Faculty, Forensic Institute of Ministry of Interior, Forensic Laboratory of Veterinary faculty of University of Zagreb) and State’s Attorney Office, with aim to establish a formal working group for fighting wildlife crime and the development of the NAP (poisoning, IKB and trafficking). Activity was conducted in a synergy with BalkanDetox LIFE and LIFE SWiPE.

On 06/10/2022 Biom held an online workshop including lecturers from the CMS Secretariat and representatives of all key national institutions, who expressed support for the process of developing the NAP, which would be officially launched by the MoE. As a result of the project, MoE decided to take responsibility for the process of the national roadmap for tackling wildlife crime, which will include the national action plan for IKB. The strategic document will be developed by 2025. *A detailed summary of BIOM’s NAP work is annexed [Annex A3.4].*

In Italy and Cyprus:

These two countries had their NAPs already adopted by the national governments in the mid-2010s. Despite this early progress, there has been insufficient implementation of the NAP in both countries. To fight this, LIPU and BL Cyprus organized meetings to improve the NAP implementation. To put international pressure on the Italian government, LIPU sent a letter (jointly signed with WWF Italy and Legambiente), to the European Commission concerning the failure of the Italian government to implement the NAP [Annex A3.3]. In its reply, the Commission appreciated this communication and the information provided about poaching in Italy [Annex A3.5]. BL Cyprus also decided to put pressure on the government through the EC. Their complaint focused specifically on the relaxation of the law and is outlined in Action B3 in detail.

A.4 Develop Project Communication Strategy and the Subsequent National Communication and Advocacy Plans

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	30/09/2021	Actual end date:	30/01/2022

Annexed deliverables:

A4. International and national communication work plans 2021-22

The project launched a very successful awareness raising campaign called “[Flight for Survival](#)”. This campaign not only focused on this project but connected different projects and actions tackling IKB all along the African-Eurasian Flyway.

During the project period, we organized four communication strategy workshops:

- in Cyprus (28-31/10/2018), attended by 43 participants
- in Spain (27-29/06/2019) *in parallel with the IKB monitoring workshop*, 32 participants attended the communication sections.
- 1st F4S communication webinar, online (06/04/2020)
- 2nd F4S communication webinar, online (18/02/2021)

The A.4 deliverables consist of the international and national communication strategies, that are made up of the initial online campaign strategies [MTR-Annex A4.1, A4.2, A4.3, A4.4, A4.5] and the annually updated communication work plans [MTR-Annex A4.6, A4.7, A4.8, A4.9] and the new 2021-2022 strategies annexed [Annex A4].

6.1.2 B. Core actions

B.1 Reinforce the work of the National IKB Focal Points to facilitate compliance of national legislation and policies

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/10/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/08/2022	Actual end date:	31/08/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• B1.1 Workshop reports of training workshops in priority countries and international workshops• B1.2 MoU for the Ministry to sign (HOS) and lobbying letters to the Ministry			
Deliverables not reached:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memoranda of Understanding between stakeholders and government (Greece, Croatia)			

This action supported the connection between the national and international policy efforts. To facilitate understanding the EU processes, in the frame of the Nature Task Force meetings (consisting of policy staff of European BirdLife organizations) BLECA organized a workshop on how to write an official complaint to the EC (15/05/2019), gave information on flyway-level IKB cooperation (29-30/09/2021), talked about how infringement cases can be handled (30/09/2021), gave a presentation about derogation implementation (18/11/2021), and gave update on the MIKT process (3-4/05/2022). BLI organized a 2-part advocacy training webinar (11/11/2020 & 24/02/2021) for partners.

Partners liaised with the governmental National Focal Points to assist them with the reporting and explain them the requirements set by the Rome Strategic Plan and encouraged

participation at the MIKT meetings. BLI mobilized partners to support governments to respond to the MIKT [scoreboard](#) in October 2020. The first scoreboard assessment was conducted in 2018 and saw the participation of 30 national governments. A second assessment was completed in 2020 by 24 countries, including all four project countries and four additional priority countries (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia).

BLECA-BLI created the information hub under the BLI's DataZone: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/sowb/spotkilling>. We included 4 subpages on the dominant types of bird crime activities: 1. [illegal shooting](#) 2. [trapping](#), 3. [poisoning](#), 4. [nest robbing](#)

BIOM [published](#) the results of the gap analysis for law enforcement officers (in English and Croatian). The gap analysis was based on the survey of almost 400 police officers conducted in 2019. BIOM staff were invited by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development to present the Life Against Bird Crime project at the annual meeting of around 70 protected area rangers (14/10/2021). In October 2022, BIOM organized an educational workshop for nature protection rangers about illegal killing of birds in Croatia and Mediterranean. Rangers were educated on importance of eradicating IKB, scale, causes and perceptions of IKB, related legislation in Croatia and the EU, types of IKB, how to recognize it and how to tackle it. Rangers were also encouraged to join anti-IKB work, which most of them intend to do in the next hunting season. 6 people from 6 protected area management authorities (Međimurje County, Koprivnica-Križevci County, Lika-Senj County, Bjelovar-Bilogora County, City of Zagreb and Vransko lake Nature Park) participated to the event. *[Annex B1.1]*

The project will have a long-term impact on the strategic approach to tackling illegal killing of birds in protected areas management authorities in Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Istria County, Međimurje County and Varaždin County. As a result of joint direct conservation action on the Drava River, poaching was recognized as a real issue to wintering bird populations by PI Međimurje Nature, PI Varaždin County and Regional Hunting Societies of Varaždin and Međimurje Counties. PI Međimurje Nature organized a roundtable on hunting. Jointly with hunters and BIOM there was agreed an action plan for Nature 2000 management plan with a big emphasis on IKB monitoring and raising awareness campaign amongst hunters. BIOM has also signed Memorandum of Understanding with Public Institution for Management of protected areas in Dubrovnik-Neretva County (PI Dubrovnik-Neretva) on joint efforts to protect wetlands of the Neretva Delta. BIOM also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Public Institution for Management of protected areas in Istrian County (PI Natura Histrica) on joint efforts to protect wetland of the ornithological reserve "Palud". PI Natura Histrica and BIOM agreed on joint IKB monitoring.

As a complementary activity (financed by another project), we need to mention BIOM's workshops on the EU lead shot ban in wetlands and lead poisoning, as using lead ammunition for waterfowl hunting is a very common type of IKB (29/11/2021, 12/04/2022). In the scope of the Balkan Detox, BIOM was in regular contact with the Bern Convention focal point from the MoE to develop protocol for management of wildlife crime cases. Currently, the MoE (and all relevant stakeholders who are part of the working group on poisoning) want to continue working jointly on poisoning and IKB. Besides extending the scope to include both poisoning and IKB, the working group is expected to develop the IKB roadmap next year.

HOS pushed the MoE to sign an MoU on IKB collaboration that would include developing a national strategy on IKB. The MoU was sent to the minister, but it has remained unsigned *[Annex B1.2.1]*, despite the continued lobbying for its signing by HOS *[Annex B1.2.2]*.

B.2 Develop and tests scheme for IKB detecting and reporting by local volunteer networks

Foreseen start date:	01/10/2018	Actual start date:	01/10/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/12/2021	Actual end date:	31/12/2021
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>B2.1 Magazine article on volunteer engagement & description of the volunteer network (BIOM)</i> • <i>B2.2 Illegal pet market photos (HOS)</i> • <i>B2.3. Recall Operation Reports 2020-2021 (LIPU)</i> 			

Partners have developed volunteer networks the way it was foreseen in the proposal. The experience learnt from working with volunteers were collected in two engagement documents [MTR-Annex B2.1, B2.2]. With the MTR, we submitted a minimal list of the newly recruited volunteers working on IKB. Since then, the volunteer participation has been increasing. Volunteers have been educated on scope and scale of IKB, motivations, perceptions, legislation around IKB and strategies on how to deal with poachers on the field and how to report cases.

The volunteer engagement was especially a new and positive experience for BIOM. Within the scope of the project, Association BIOM has established a volunteering network for monitoring and tackling illegal killing of birds. In 2020, BIOM trained 5 volunteers, while in 2021 a total of 24 volunteers were trained to tackle quail poaching and report the use of tape lures. The network now brings together 30 volunteers across Croatia, and it is going to be expanded in the following 4 years. Development of local environmental activism to counter IKB will help to increase the number of IKB cases reported to authorities. One of BIOM's volunteers gave a presentation on the volunteering network for monitoring and tackling of IKB at TEDxNKPP Bjelovar in front of 100 people (in the heart of the blackspot region for Quail poaching). BIOM's IKB volunteer network was also portrayed in Biom's annual magazine and sent to all Biom members and governmental institutions that are competent for nature conservation in Croatia [Annex B2.1].

In Greece, volunteer involvement was planned in two areas: 1. to monitor illegal trade on black markets, pet shops and online marketplaces 2. to monitor illegal hunting on the Ionian islands. After the initial 2019 spring season, HOS substituted human volunteers with automated sound recorders for the spring shot counts in the Ionian islands. HOS still employed volunteers for monitoring pet shops and open markets in Athens. Volunteer monitoring of the biggest outdoor market in Athens was not conducted consistently, due to disruption by Covid and also concerns about the safety of the volunteers, however irregular visits were made that recorded illegalities with some photographic documentation [Annex B2.2]. HOS reported several complaints on these irregularities to the police which has resulted in increased controlling at the infamous Schisto market in particular. Complementary to this project, HOS presented the wildlife crime issue – and how to report it - at two Important Bird Area (IBA) Caretakers seminars.

LIPU has built on the results of previous LIFE projects, using its already existing protocols and its established volunteer network, which was further extended in the frame of the current project. LIPU volunteers are legally recognized civil rangers with an official certification obtained after a course of 'Guardie Volontarie'. They give valuable support to the Carabinieri Forestali in

their fight against the illegal use of electronic devices. The joint operation in Rome province (called ‘Operation Recall’) between the Carabinieri Forestali and LIPU volunteers takes place every autumn. Attached is the report for the years 2020 and 2021 and the trend graph from 2016. [*Annex B2.3*].

In Cyprus, the anti-trapping monitoring survey is dependent on volunteer support. The survey is carried out every year during autumn/winter/spring trapping seasons.

Furthermore, Biom's IKB officer was invited to give a lecture in Slovenia to volunteers of DOPPS/BirdLife Slovenia about the established volunteer network to monitor poaching in scope of the LIFE ABC project to share the experience.

As reported earlier, the project beneficiaries reconsidered the creation of the specific internet-based communication platform, which was originally foreseen in the proposal, and EASME accepted our decision to use WhatsApp, Skype, e-mail and other existing channels to communicate effectively with the volunteers.

B.3 Enhance implementation of Bird Directive (IKB related legislations)

Foreseen start date:	01/10/2018	Actual start date:	01/10/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/12/2021	Actual end date:	31/12/2021
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B3.1. Recommendations for improvements to the sanctioning framework in the priority countries • B3.2. ECD public consultation (submitted in May 2021) and <i>joint NGO ECD position paper</i> (prepared in autumn 2022) • <i>B3.3 Consultation document gathering good practices to prevent IKB</i> • B3.4 Developing and submitting a strategic complaint to the European Commission regarding the violation by the Greek State of Article 7(4) of the Birds Directive (HOS) 			
Changes:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Synthesis report on the Environmental Crime Directive in priority countries” was changed to “Input to ECD public consultation and stakeholder meetings” 			
Milestones			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings of the MIKT and the Illegal killing of birds working group • Workshop on the legal framework on criminal penalties held in the priority countries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2019.11.29 International workshop on IKB (Athens, Greece) ○ 2020.03.04 International enforcement workshop on wildlife crime (Madrid, Spain) ○ 2020.12.15-16 Training workshop for police officers in Croatia (Neretva-delta) 			

Project partners participated at the joint meetings of the Bern Convention and CMS MIKT ([MIKT3](#) 8-10/05/2019, Rome – [official report](#), [MIKT4](#) 09-11/06/2021 /online/- [official report](#), [MIKT5](#) 07-09/06/2022 Valencia / hybrid – [official report](#)). On each occasion BLI/BLECA presented an update on our joint activities against IKB, and partners actively advocated for stricter

measures and transparency both during the MIKT meeting and at the public consultation process. At MIKT5 our external database expert [presented](#) the recommendations for the international bird crime database.

The foreseen policy reports under this action were combined into one more comprehensive study, titled “[The Enforcement Chain: can it effectively address the Illegal Killing of Birds in four Mediterranean countries?](#)” [*Annex B3.1*] and was published in February 2021.

Our work on the Environmental Crime Directive followed closely the EU revision process. Although we merged the synthesis report on the ECD with the above-mentioned report, detailing the penalties imposed by priority countries to fight IKB and organized crime, we further participated at stakeholder meetings (30/04/2020, 27/24/2021), partnered up with other conservation NGOs (Traffic, EEB, WWF etc.), developed joint positions on the draft and have sent our recommendations to the Commission. [*Annex B3.2*] (After the end of the project, in early December 2022, the justice ministers of the member states adopted their positions on the revision of the ECD. This position watered down the penalty and sanction levels and stripped a few other crucial provisions from their substance, thus we will keep up a strong focus on this issue, hoping that the European Parliament will rectify the shortcomings of the Council’s position.)

DG Envi sent out a call for consulting on the draft document gathering good practices on preventing IKB. The LIFE ABC project showcased as a cross-cutting initiative. We collected and summarized further inputs from partners, also added the project’s awareness raising campaign and submitted to the EC in early May. [*Annex B3.3.1*] Closely linked to the issue of IKB is the issue of unsustainable hunting of species with conservation concern. Therefore, we provided comments for the EC on the “Review of data on Birds Directive Annex II species with non-Secure status”. For certain species, the number of poached birds per year is extensive and needs to be taken into account in the decision-making process (e.g. in adaptive harvest management models). We played a significant role in forming the internal position paper of the European BirdLife partnership in connection with the hunting of species that are in a non-favourable conservation status. In November 2021, BirdLife Europe submitted its contribution to the survey 'Evaluation and revision of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking'. [*Annex B3.3.2*]

In Cyprus, it was a major setback when the Cyprus government passed an amendment to the 'Birds and Game law' in December 2020 to reduce on-the-spot fines for possession of songbirds from €2000 to €200. BirdLife Cyprus has been trying to reverse this law relaxation ever since. As a direct result of these efforts, in October 2021, the European Commission [called on](#) the Cyprus government to increase the fines for ‘the harmonisation of the fines for all species by removing the lower fines currently set for the 14 protected species’. BLCy’s project coordinator was featured on a midday news broadcast, on the state TV channel RIK '[Apo Mera se Mera](#)', to discuss this strongly-worded response from the Commission. BLCy - in coordination with BLECA – collected endorsements from 22 EU BirdLife partner organizations for a joint letter addressed to the President of Cyprus Parliament, raising concerns about the relaxations. The related [e-petition](#) gathered 13,780 signatures from 137 countries. The partnership letter and e-petition signatures were [handed over](#) to Cyprus Parliament President on 30/11/2021. BLCy organized meetings with DG Environment Commission desk officers to continue to put pressure on the Cypriot

government regarding the law changes. Lobbying meetings were also organized with the German Ambassador, the Italian, UK and Swiss embassies, and EU Commission Representation in Cyprus (27/04/2022). BLCy has continued lobbying the Commission to keep the pressure on the Cypriot government, including by sharing their Autumn 2021 trapping report, as well as follow up emails to the relevant desk officers. (To keep up the pressure, in 2023, BL Cyprus plans to bring an art photo exhibition portraying the story of the illegal killing of migratory birds in Cyprus to Brussels for a high-level event for MEPs).

In Greece, HOS organized an international workshop in Athens, Greece (29/11/2019) on the legal framework for criminal penalties, with the participation of the EC DG Environment, RSPB and the University of Tarragona, amongst others. As a new deliverable to the project (approved in 2021), HOS prepared and submitted (on 02/06/2022) the strategic complaint to the European Commission regarding the violation by the Greek State of Article 7(4) of the Birds Directive. [*Annex B3.4*]. (The complaint contained several annexed evidence, that we do not annex to this report because of their size but are available on request). HOS has not received any response so far. We expect that the submission of the Strategic Complaint and a consequent reaction of the EC will further motivate the Greek state to combat the crime against wild birds efficiently and effectively.

In Italy, LIPU's [petition](#) for stronger laws collected 180K signatures, which were handed over to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment in September 2021. As mentioned under Action A3, LIPU with WWF Italy and Legambiente sent a joint letter to the European Commission concerning the failure of the Italian government to step up against poaching. The Commission answered in a letter on 21/02/2022, thanking them for the information provided (see in Action A3).

In Croatia, since a change in Croatian hunting legislation in 2018, hunting management plans potentially influencing the Natura 2000 network are prone to 'appropriate assessments' (AA). In October 2021, the hunting management plan for the Našička Breznica fishpond was the first one to finish the AA process. Biom has sent a request for all documentation regarding the AA to the Ministry. (IKB is a grave problem on carp fishponds as research has shown that the rate of strictly protected species within a hunting bag is an average 16%.) Upon being denied copies of the hunting management plans, Biom have filed a complaint to request for more transparency. Finally, Biom was allowed access to the documents.

In March 2022, Biom was successful in improving a policy of the city of Zagreb towards populations of crows (Rooks and Hooded crows). Biom wrote a position paper regarding Rooks and Crows in cities, in which they advocated for other methods than nest removal that might draw Rooks and Crows out of cities to farmlands. On 10th March 2022, project's policy officer participated in the session of the City of Zagreb Assembly's Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. The whole discussion was based on Biom's position paper and their propositions of changing policy towards corvids were adopted in all points. In May 2022, Biom organized a seminar on ecology and sustainable management strategies for urban crow populations. There were eight representatives from Zagreb City's city district councils in attendance. The illegal destruction of Rook nests in Zagreb and Koprivnica has been halted thanks to Biom's efforts.

Complementary to this project, the partnership actively supported the fight against IKB in regions that are adjacent to ours, but out of the geographical scope of our current focus. The LIFE ABC project is named as a supporter in the [Zadar Declaration](#) – an international anti-IKB policy call, that was adopted by the participants of the 4th Adriatic Flyway Conference (25-29 April 2022, Zadar, Croatia) with the coordination of EuroNatur. BLI project coordinator participated at the regional workshop "A Road Map to tackle IKB in the Middle East" in Amman, Jordan (25-29/10/2021). The workshop was organised in cooperation with the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN). Governmental and NGO representatives from Lebanon, Syria, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq, the UAE, Yemen, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Jordan came together to agree a Roadmap to tackle IKB in the wider Middle East region. This is the first initiative of its kind at intergovernmental level and has the full support of CMS and the Raptors MoU.

B.4 Engage with key stakeholders representing the 'users' of illegally killed/captured birds to discourage practices

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/03/2019	Actual end date:	31/03/2019
Annexed deliverables: -			

The project partners selected their “end user” groups to focus on and developed the targeted communication strategies. [MTR-Annex B4.1, B4.2, B4.3, B4.4] The activities were completed by and fully reported in the MTR.

B.5 Implement and disseminate collaborative communication actions with key stakeholders

Foreseen start date:	01/01/2019	Actual start date:	01/01/2019
Foreseen end date:	30/06/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<p>B5. Progress reports of Demonstration Projects with user - stakeholder groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B5.1 Croatia: Demonstration project: “Changing the winds under quails’ wings” • B5.2 Cyprus: Demonstration progress report - educational awareness outreach activities of BirdLife Cyprus • B5.3 Italy: Progress report of Demonstration Projects with user-stakeholder groups • B5.4 Greece: Environmental education as a tool to combat illegal spring hunting in the Ionian Islands • <i>B5.5 Educational brochure for police officers (BIOM)</i> • <i>B5.6 Birdwatching guidebook (BL Cy)</i> 			

Action B.5 implemented the targeted communication strategies (designed within Action B.4), mainly toward the younger generation, which can be influenced the most. (BL Cyprus originally

also wanted to target restaurant owners with the idea to develop a certification scheme for restaurants that supports the ‘no *ambelopoulia* served’ policy, but unfortunately because of Covid - 19 we had to abandon this idea.) Beside children, BIOM and BL Cy also worked with hunters.

BLCy therefore concentrated its efforts on school education activities, strongly building on LIPU’s previous experience about the “soft approach” targeting primary school students in the most important blackspot areas (mainly in Famagusta and Larnaca districts). The yearly target of BirdLife Cyprus’s educational outreach was 1,500 schoolchildren. The challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic and relevant lockdowns, restricted the programme, especially at the beginning. However, BLCy still managed to involve 4839 schoolchildren in its program over the project period. [Annex B5.2]

LIPU focused its educational activities in SW Sardinia (building on the previous success in SE Sardinia, where educational activities resulted in significant decline in trapping). The activities reached 912 students ranging from primary to high school. Two public events were organized: in 2019 and 2020 they celebrated on 2 February the Wetland’s Day in collaborations with the Molentargius Park (Ramsar site), involving cc. 140 people, however it could not be organized in 2021-22 due to Covid-19 measures. [Annex B5.3]

HOS developed an environmental education campaign which included the enrichment of well-focused educational material for educators and kids targeting illegal bird trapping and trade, implementation of school visits in the Ionian islands, organisation and participation in open events and implementation of educational seminars for educators. During the school visits, outdoor and classroom environmental education activities were implemented by the HOS educational team. These activities included educational presentations, movement activities, handicrafts and painting, games, slam poetry workshop and other activities. In total, more than 1,670 school pupils aged between 6-16 years old have taken part at the project environmental education program. [Annex B5.4]

BIOM conducted education for 6 classes of 98 schoolchildren. Biom also organized simulation games for high school students, where they were separated into stakeholder groups in a simulation game set in a fictional region where a major problem of poaching fictional species exists. Besides school visits, many awareness raising activities were carried out in the Učka bird ringing educational camp, which was held in August-September 2021 – during this period a total of 147 participants were present and learnt about bird migration and threats to birds on their flyway. BIOM also organized lectures on IKB for students of Hunting and Nature Protection course at the University of Zagreb (25 students).

BIOM and BLCy also initiated contact with hunters, as they are the most important stakeholder group for IKB. Both organizations managed to hold several meetings with leaders of hunter’s associations and gave successful presentations for local hunters. (Cyprus: Paliometoxo, 6/10/2021, Croatia: hunter workshop in Mura-Drava Regional Park, 09/06/2022)

Several different educational and communication materials have been prepared under this action. There are two new publications that were printed since the time of the Mid-term Report:

- BIOM produced an educational brochure for police officers (2500 copies) distributed to all police stations in Croatia. [Annex B5.5]
- BLCy launched a birdwatching guidebook (500 copies English) [Annex B5.6]

B.6 Establishment or development of joint national enforcement teams

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	30/09/2021	Actual end date:	31/12/2021
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.6 Protocol for dismantling poaching hides in Croatia 			

This action requires project partners to engage with the enforcement agencies in their country. *(Note: HOS is not directly involved in this action. HOS has reported several illegalities to the competent authorities, but no joint operations were planned.)* Naturally, many working meetings were held with enforcement bodies in 3 priority countries, which cannot be all detailed here (meeting with Croatian Ministry and State Inspectorate, Coordination table meetings in Italy, HOS-Ministry meetings).

In Italy, as part of the implementation of the NAP, the Carabinieri Forestali have formally established Local Coordination Units (COLPA) aimed at facilitating the cooperation between LEAs, NGOs and Hunting associations at blackspots. LIPU has coordinated the development of a clear ToR for the joint NGO representatives in each of the seven COLPA. LIPU volunteers sit in two of the COLPAs. The COLPA represent a useful tool to streamline communications and cooperation between LEAs and NGOs. Regular meetings have been held in the COLPA throughout the project’s implementation period.

In Cyprus, BirdLife Cyprus has a well-established, joint, anti-trapping monitoring survey with the Sovereign Base Area (SBA) Police during spring (April), autumn (September/October) and winter (January/February) trapping seasons. An unfortunate development was that the Cypriot government dismantled the special Anti-poaching Unit of the Cyprus Police in November 2019. BLCy sought advice to put international pressure to improve the situation, but it was concluded that the re-structuring of the enforcement in itself is not conclusive for EC intervention. Subsequently, BL Cyprus collected evidence through its standard monitoring scheme to prove the negative impact of this decision. The IKB monitoring reports and the recommendations formed part of the EC letter, that is outlined in detail under action B3 and resulted in strongly worded response from EC in October 2021.

After a gap due to Covid-19 in 2020, the covert surveillance was carried out in cooperation with RSPB experts and the SBA Police in autumn 2021 and 2022 and resulted in some remarkable footage. In September 2021, BLCy field team visited a large trapping site and covertly filmed illegal bird trapping activity taking place. The recording was handed over to both the Game Service and Cyprus Police to take action. BLCy field team also discovered an illegal shooting area with tens of dead bee-eaters and other protected bird species. These photos received huge media attention.

In Croatia, BIOM has been advocating for joint national enforcement teams where BIOM, State Inspectorate and Police could work together. (There have been several joint actions, but these are not institutionalized or formalized.)

Some of the most successful joint activities with involvement of Croatian law enforcement agencies and BIOM have resulted in the dismantlement of seven illegal hunting hides at Natura2000 site

“Dravske akumulacije”. Action has been conducted by transfer of knowledge by BIOM Association to Public Institution for Nature protection of Međimurje County (PI Međimurje Nature) in Northern Croatia. BIOM developed the procedure for dismantling infrastructure for illegal killing of birds based on experience from its activities on the Ormož Lake and Neretva Delta. Nature protection rangers used the NGO’s guidance and, in cooperation with BIOM, Public Institution for Management of protected areas in Varaždin County directly tackled illegal killing of birds on the hydroelectric reservoir “Donja Dubrava” on the Drava River. BIOM wrote the protocol for dismantling hides as a useful document and will continue to apply it in the future in collaboration with local enforcement agencies. *[Annex B6]*

In October 2022, Biom distributed 1820 educational brochures for police officers about illegal killing of birds to all 187 police stations in Croatia. Biom has also distributed 168 copies of “Best practice guidelines” for IKB monitoring (translated into Croatian) to all Public Institutions for management of protected areas, MoE, Police directorate at the Ministry of the Interior, Hunting Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Inspectorate.

B.7 Develop pilot initiatives in priority countries (Project Catalogue)

Foreseen start date:	01/10/2018	Actual start date:	01/10/2018
Foreseen end date:	28/02/2020	Actual end date:	16/02/2020
Annexed deliverables: -			

This activity was completed prior and fully reported at the time of the MTR.

In the frame of this action, the partnership collected and developed a project catalogue with IKB-related pilot projects. *[MTR-Annex B7.1]* Some of the projects received support from the donations collected through the “Flight for Survival” campaign. BLI organized a 2-day IKB project design workshop in Brussels on 18-19/02/2020 with 24 participants from the priority flyway countries. A project proposal was developed and subsequently approved for funding by the MAVA Foundation (as the Safe Flyways IKB 2 project).

B.8 Awareness raising campaign through national events and online engagement actions

Foreseen start date:	01/10/2018	Actual start date:	01/10/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B8.1 List of national events in priority countries • B8.2 Campaign report 2020 • B8.3 Campaign report 2021 • B8.4 Artistic mural work in Cyprus • B8.5 Video & TV spot against bird trapping • B8.6 Summer kiosks in the Ionian Islands (2 sites) 			

The strategy of the international awareness raising campaign was developed and described under Action A.4. The Flight for Survival campaign ran from 2019, annual reports were produced with media statistics [2019: MTR-Annex B8.1], [2020: Annex B8.2], [2021: Annex B8.3] Birdlife shared the articles with an intensive social media presence during the peak migration periods (spring and autumn). During the project period, the campaign had over 19 million reaches. The reaches obviously overlap to a great extent between the different campaign periods, but we estimate that it can be translated to at least around 5 million people.

The campaign and the awareness raising was supported with live public events – with major disruptions during the Covid-19 measures. In spite of the challenges, the partnership implemented several events that included lectures and presentations, environmental education activities, mobile exhibition, guided tour walks, release of confiscated and rehabilitated birds etc. List of the national events are annexed [Annex B8.1]. Based on the collected information, our awareness raising events for the general public (both online and offline) were attended by around 70,311 people.

BLCy ordered a mural depicting a Blackcap (one of the songbirds most affected by IKB) and conveying the dual emotions in connection with trapping and freedom [Annex B8.4]. The mural was painted on Ayios Andreas Primary School's wall in Nicosia during 2020 and an additional sign explains the artwork and the acknowledgement of the LIFE co-financing. BLCy organized mural events for classes of 10-year-old pupils: visit started with a presentation about migratory birds and the threats they're facing, including illegal bird killing, then they moved outside to see the mural and discussed about what it presents and what message it carries, afterwards played the board game 'Feathered journeys' about difficulties during migration. At the end of August, BLCy ran a paid 10-day social media campaign titled "5 reasons why we should not eat ambelopoulia" targeting the hunting community. This social campaign had an overall reach of 40,000+, with 2,700 link clicks, 157 reactions and 90 comments.

HOS proposed additional new deliverables as a way of reaching more people. The reports about the TV and [video spot](#) are annexed [Annex B8.5] – which was further supported by [new campaign dedicated pages](#) (EN/GR) on HOS' website - and about the two summer information kiosks in Zante and Corfu [Annex B8.6].

LIPU's petition "Stop Braconaggio" was highly successful for outreach: it collected almost 180K signatures and these have been virtually handed to the Prime Minister (Mr. Cgiuseppe Conte) and the Minister of Environment (Gen. Sergio Costa) on 18/09/2020.). In order to spread the #stopbraccooning campaign further, illustrative posters were placed out in 20 bus shelters, while at the Cagliari airport a video clip spreading the same message was projected in the departure hall for the entire month of July 2022. Complementary to this activity (but financed through other means) LIPU also initiated a [creation of a mural](#) in Cagliari with the aim of creating a culture of protecting local biodiversity and saying #stopbraccooning. Here the painting was done by the students of the city's art school and street artist Manu Invisible.

BIOM's radio campaign on quail poaching has aired on 44 Croatian local radio stations and on the number one listened national radio station in Croatia (02-06/09/2021). The campaign was created as a 30 second "guerilla radio ad" for selling illegal tape lures. To complement the campaign, Biom invited a journalist from the prime-time TV show "Potraga" for an anti-poaching operation. After the campaign was aired, Biom received several inquiries and reports from the public concerning tape lures.

6.1.3 C. Monitoring of project impact

C.1 Monitor Project Impact Indicators to Evaluate the Impact of the Deployed Communication Actions

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables: -			
<i>Note: C1 reporting deliverables were spared due to redundancy</i>			

The monitoring of the project has been coordinated by the project manager and supervised by the Steering Committee. (see Action E.2)

We developed monitoring schemes to estimate the project impact on the project specific indicators, as below:

IKB cases at the blackspots	IKB monitoring protocols (shot counts, trapping, electronic callers, market monitoring etc.)	Data collected via Action A.1, reported through the project specific KPIs
Government engagement	Scoreboard reporting to CMS, derogation reports, NAP implementation report	Checked yearly by national partners (Action B.3)
Communication output indicators	Continuously monitored and reported by comms officers	Harmonized indicators collected in online google forms. Annual campaign report (B8) and Summary report available (Action D4)
Behavioral impact	Opinion poll of ambelopoulia consumers, educational activities	Addressed via Action C.2
Financial monitoring	Regular financial reporting	LIFE template and Microsoft Teams (Action E.5)
Project management	Biannual steering committee meetings, monthly progress reports	Action E.2.

After the 2nd monitoring visit, EASME kindly accepted our suggestion to omit redundant deliverables on the C.1 annual project management and impact assessment reports, because the relevant key indicators are all addressed under specific actions.

The project manager updated the KPI online tool with the end of the project values. Outcomes are evaluated against the project's objectives under section 6.3 of this report.

C.2 Assess socio-economic effect of the project

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C2.1 Socio-economic impact report- Cyprus • C2.2 Socio-economic impact report- Croatia • C2.3 Socio-economic impact report- Italy • C2.4 Socio-economic impact report- Greece 			

In Cyprus, BL Cy carried out a telephone opinion poll in early 2019 focusing on the illegal consumption of songbirds, aiming to understand better the profile of the *ambelopoulia* consumer (age, motivation, attitudes towards nature protection) and to identify factors that would potentially make them change their attitude and habits. The 2019 study was not financed from this project, but it provided us with baseline indicators. In the frame of the current project, BL Cy repeated the opinion poll on *ambelopoulia* consumption during mid-September 2022 by a consultancy and results were compiled and analysed during October. Socio-economic impact report written and finalised, comparing 2019 vs 2022 findings on *ambelopoulia* consumption [*Annex C2.1*].

Based on the respondents' replies in 2022, about 16% of the adult population have responded positively to eating *ambelopoulia*, a small positive reduction compared to 2019 when this was 17%. In terms of total number of consumers, this would be equivalent to a reduction from about 117,000 to 110,000 adult individuals during this period (based on 2019 population census statistics). The typical consumer is a man, between 36-55 years old, is or was a hunter, and lives in the trapping hotspot areas or in Nicosia. He meets at home with other friends to consume the so-called traditional *ambelopoulia* delicacy, a few times per year.

Although it is not possible to know the exact reasons behind this reduction, it is believed that a combination of factors could have contributed to this including 1. BirdLife Cyprus' increased media exposure 2. higher price of the *ambelopoulia* dish, [gap between the actual paid price (~€58) for the *ambelopoulia* dish compared to the willingness to pay price (~€43) 2. covid lockdowns.

BIOM: In April and May 2019 BIOM, with the help of external subcontractor, undertook a computer-assisted telephone interviewing survey. Number of respondents was 1500, stratified according to sex, age, region and place of residence size. During March 2022, the second public opinion poll on IKB in Croatia has been conducted with 1666 random members of the public. This was done to detect the changes in public's perception and knowledge on IKB during the implementation of the LIFE ABC project [*Annex C2.2*].

According to BIOM's opinion poll, the majority condemn bird crime as an unlawful act, but less than half of the respondents to the study said they would report a bird crime in 2022. People's general attitude would still be to avoid active reporting of bird crime to the authorities. In 2022, 42.3% of respondents said they find tackling the IKB important, compared to 76.2% in 2019. This shows a significant reduction of public interest in nature protection. This is likely at least partly attributable to a shift of perceived priorities due to external factors such as the pandemic, war in Europe and the challenges facing the Croatian economy.

LIPU carried out a survey on consumers of trapped birds – similar in aims and method to the one in Cyprus [*Annex C2.3 – Italian and English reports*]. Results showed that 30% of the respondents have eaten illegally killed thrushes; the consumers are typically over the age of 55 and they consume such illegal meals once a year on average. LIPU also ordered another, complementary study, which was financed from other project (MAVA) on the perception of poaching among young people aged between 18 and 30.

In Greece, HOS subcontracted an external research team to carry out the socio-economic study on illegal bird trapping and trading. The method differed from the opinion polls, as they focused on people known to have personal experience with IKB and they conducted in-depth interviews with this focus group [*Annex C2.4*].

In total, 27 interviews carried out with illegal bird trappers, with only 20 people consenting to the interview being recorded. The main findings were that the trappers, despite having observed the decline in birds’ populations, do not feel responsible for this decrease but rather attribute this to other factors, such as: a) the excessive use of pesticides, b) the growth of the cities and generally the increase of buildings and infrastructure, and c) wind turbines. As trappers of live birds, they consider themselves different to other hunters: their goal is not to kill the birds, but to keep them alive in order to keep them as pets. Some of the trappers claim that they love birds and that the methods they use to trap them are not traumatic for the birds (although the estimated mortality of trapping is between 50-80%). The research team encountered the argument that birds would not “sing” in their cages if they were not happy. In rural Greece, trapping was a way for young men to spend quality time with their male relatives (fathers, grandfathers, or uncles), so there is a sentimental dimension to the activity.

The interviews confirmed the presence of illegal trade between countries, with testimonials that point to exports to Albania and North Macedonia and imports possibly from N. Macedonia, Malta, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria and Italy. They also revealed that birds are transported by boat, with interviewees talking about cargos coming to Patra, Kyllini, Katakolo and Drapetsona. This finding is very important for HOS who are already using this information to target their proposed trainings for the competent authorities under the next IKB project. The most common victims of trapping are Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Linnets, Eurasian skylarks, Serins and Siskins.

A lack of a common registration protocol for trapping incidents among the competent authorities makes it hard to estimate the real number of birds involved. The most accurate data comes from 2020, for which it was estimated that from the 610 confiscations that the Forestry Services conducted, the profit for the trappers would be 12.860-79.650 euro. In reality, this must be a 10% of the real activity. Another difficulty is online trade, where the consumers do not encounter the conditions in which the birds are kept, thus they remain unaware of the animal welfare side of the problem.

6.1.4 D. Communication and dissemination of the project and its results

D.1 Create and maintain the project website and Internet presence, including web-based tools to facilitate internal communication

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	28/02/2019	Actual end date:	30/03/2019

Annexed deliverables: -

In early 2019 the project's website was launched in English. We created separate subpages under the main campaign domain: <https://flightforsurvival.org/life-against-bird-crimes/> and soon the translations to other project languages were added: Greek, Italian and Croatian. Partners linked their websites to the project's page.

BIOM: <https://www.biom.hr/projekti/life-against-bird-crime/>

BL Cyprus: <https://birdlifecyprus.org/LIFE-ABC-gr>

HOS: www.ornithologiki.gr/ikb

LIPU: <http://www.lipu.it/stopbraconaggio>

In 2021, the 'Flight for Survival' website was revamped with additional flagship species, country pages, wider language selection, downloadable project materials and access to our newsletter. We uploaded and published project outputs continuously.

The project website has been visited 447,994 times during the project's implementation period.

D.2 Develop and install external communication at project sites (signboards)

Foreseen start date:	01/01/2019	Actual start date:	01/01/2019
Foreseen end date:	31/12/2019	Actual end date:	31/07/2022
Annexed deliverables: D.2 Photos of the project signboards			

Note: This action is only relevant for HOS, as no other organization allocated budget for this.

With significant delays, the signboards were erected at 4 locations on 3 Ionian islands: two on Zakynthos, one on Corfu, one on Othonoi [*Annex D2*].

D.3 Facilitate knowledge exchange across the region including attendance at international workshops and meetings

Foreseen start date:	01/10/2018	Actual start date:	01/10/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• D3.1 Knowledge sharing workshops and webinars held (min. 3) and External IKB events attended representing the project (min. 5)• D3.2 LABC international closing event report (milestone)			

The project beneficiaries highly prioritized the knowledge exchange and information flow within the conservation community. The partnership took part in at least 56 different professional events (see Annex B8.1). The annexed deliverables under this action list those most important IKB meetings, workshops and webinars that served both for exchanging experience and building collaboration. Due to Covid-19 many of these events were organized online or in a hybrid format, which were quite cost-effective. To further aid the information flow we created the [Wildlife Crime Newsletter](#) that is published every 2 months for 200+ recipients and a webinar series called “Lunchtime IKB talks” (the latter is listed under [\[Annex D3.1\]](#)).

BLI and BLECA jointly organized the project’s closing workshop in Albania (18*20/10/2022). 48 conservation experts who work against IKB in the Mediterranean attended from 23 different countries [\[Annex D3.2\]](#). The networking has not ended with the project; it will continue to play an important role in our after-LIFE period. We keep organizing the highly successful IKB “lunchtime talks” in 2023: besides knowledge exchange, it has become an important “community building tool” as a live forum for engaging with the professional IKB conservationists.

D.4 Ensure effective national and international media coverage of the project

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables:			
D4.1 Media Report: Press releases and articles - broadcasts in external media			
D4.2 <i>Adnkronos 2022 media releases (LIPU)</i>			
D4.3 <i>Ali magazine article about the LIFE ABC project (LIPU)</i>			

The project partnership produced 108 press releases, which were echoed in numerous press articles (at least in 1520 online and paper-based appearances). The project had over 100 TV and radio broadcasting and participated at more than 170 public events. We published 91 international website articles (in English) and countless social media posts. Please, read our comprehensive Media Report [\[Annex D4\]](#).

BIOM purchased Mediatoolkit, a media reporting service, which records all of IKB news from Croatian media to keep track of the communication outreach. LIPU purchased publication service from the press agency “Adnkronos” to ensure a good dissemination of news and communiqués about the activities carried out within the project and to spread the message of their #stoppoaching campaign [\[Annex D4.2\]](#). In the autumn edition of Ali (Lipu’s magazine), an article was dedicated to the LIFE ABC project, in particular on the communication aspects of the project. Ali is the magazine sent to all Lipu members and distributed in Lipu Nature Reserves and Recovery Centres [\[Annex D4.3\]](#).

D.5 Produce Layman's Report on the objectives, activities, and results of the project

Foreseen start date:	01/07/2021	Actual start date:	01/07/2022
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022

Annexed deliverables: D5.1 Laymen’s Report (English version) D5.2 Laymen’s Report (Croatian version) D5.3 Laymen’s Report (Italian version) D5.4 Laymen’s Report (Greek version)
--

The English version was printed in small quantity (50 paper copies) for the closing workshop and distributed among the participants. All versions are available electronically online at the [project’s website](#).

6.1.5 E. Project management

E.1 Establish and make operational a Project Team

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables: -			

BLECA project manager started on 07/11/2018. Coordination meetings between the PM and national project coordinators were regular throughout the project. Personnel changes occurred throughout the project at all partner organizations – thus, all together 66 people served the project for longer or shorter periods.

Apart from the official changes already reported, HOS changed legal representative in 2021. The election took place on 27th of June 2021 and since then the legal representative of HOS is Mrs. Niki Kardakari.

E.2 Establish and make operational a Project Steering Committee

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/03/2022
Annexed deliverables: -			

The Steering Committee was established at the beginning of the project and its TOR approved. *[MTR-Annex E2.1]* Steering Committee meetings (SCM) were organized twice per year, where PM presented the project updates and discussed upcoming tasks.

- 1st SCM 29/11/2018 (together with the kick-off meeting)
- 2nd SCM 03/05/2019
- 3rd SCM 08/11/2019
- 4th SCM 17/02/2020
- 5th SCM 08/10/2020

6th SCM 23/02/2021

7th SCM 26/10/2021

8th SCM 22/03/2022

The PM team also formally set-up the Advisory Group, with a ToR agreed and a Microsoft Team group was created for internal communication. [MTR-Annex E2.2] We invited a broad range of conservation experts into this Advisory Group, because the technical advice that the project needs are very diverse (it includes knowledge on species, monitoring, hunting regulations, databases, communication, socio-economic methods, remote sensing etc.). However, in practice we have found it more effective to directly engage with the specific advisors when we need advice, rather than discuss these highly specific topics with the whole Advisory Group.

E.3 Project Partnership Agreements

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/09/2018
Foreseen end date:	30/11/2018	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables: <i>E3 Amendment No.1 to HOS-BLECA Partnership Contract</i>			

All PAs were signed. An amendment was added to the HOS-BLECA agreement to transfer 30,000 euro underspending from HOS budget. (This budget was used to cover the cost of the closing workshop held in October 2022, in Albania.)

Dates of signature			Amendment	
Partner	Partner's	SBE's	Partner's	SBE's
LIPU	24/10/2018	24/10/2018		
HOS	14/10/2018	05/11/2018	26/09/2022	29/09/2022
BLCy	19/09/2018	01/10/2018		
BIOM	24/09/2018	08/10/2018		
BLI	28/11/2018	06/12/2018		

On 30/09/2021, the partnership submitted an amendment request to CINEA for the extension of the project's duration until October 2022, which was approved.

E.4 Develop an "After-Life Communication Plan"

Foreseen start date:	01/07/2021	Actual start date:	15/06/2022
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/10/2022
Annexed deliverables: E4 After-LIFE communication plan			

The after-LIFE communication was jointly created by the project consortium. [Annex E4] and is available for download on the [project's website](#).

E.5 Technical and Financial Reporting

Foreseen start date:	01/09/2018	Actual start date:	01/12/2018
Foreseen end date:	31/10/2022	Actual end date:	31/01/2023
Deliverable: Final Report			

All reports have been submitted in time, as shown in the following table:

<i>Type of report</i>	<i>Deadline foreseen in the proposal</i>	<i>Actual date</i>
1 st Progress report	30/11/2019	30/11/2019
Midterm report	30/11/2020	30/07/2020
2 nd Progress report	30/11/2021	26/11/2021
Final report	extension – 31/01/2023	01/02/2023

6.2 Main deviations, problems and corrective actions implemented

Action A.2

As explained in previous reports, we requested a change in the deliverables for this action. Instead of developing an operational database, we deliver a report with the overview of existing databases and detailed recommendations for an EU-level bird crime database.

Covid-19 related changes

The pandemic had a major impact on the project's implementation in several areas, especially during the travel restrictions. Therefore, we requested and were granted an additional 8 month implementation period. Many of our activities could be moved online, like several educational and knowledge-sharing events. Our conference on the National Action Plans was re-organized a year later in an online format, but the previously paid costs could not have been retrieved. The pandemic meant we had to cancel ideas on demonstration projects such as working with restaurants in Cyprus or hunting tourists in Croatia, it negatively affected the spring IKB monitoring activity in 2020, and severely disrupted our planned local public events for 1.5 years– which were mostly made up for during the expanded project period.

National Action Plans (A3) and MoUs (B1)

The partnership invested lot of energy into working with the national governments to adopt (Croatia, Greece) and implement (Cyprus, Italy) NAPs against IKB. Despite some smaller progress, the project could not deliver on the planned results due to lack of political will from the national governments. As for the Croatian NAP, after years of negotiations, BIOM at least managed to agree with the MoE that they would take over the development of the NAP. (The expert service is finally supporting the cause, but the head of the Nature Directorate still needs to be convinced.) BIOM didn't succeed in signing an MoU with the relevant national ministries but managed to sign

one with the Public Institution for Management of Protected Areas in some important IKB blackspots (with PI Dubrovnik-Neretva and with PI Natura Histrica).

In Croatia, the problem is being overcome by finding synergies within other LIFE projects (e.g. BalkanDetox LIFE and LIFE SWiPE), which enable further work to bring together relevant stakeholders and establish working group for a national action plan. HOS, LIPU and BLCyprus have also tried to overcome the lack of governmental will by calling on international pressure from the EU and multilateral environmental agreements. (For the efforts on lobbying at EU level, see Action B3 for details.)

6.3 Evaluation of Project Implementation

Having a LIFE project with various partners at a flyway level is a very good approach to show joint efforts to address IKB along the migration route, also for enhanced communication to the general public. The downside is that at national levels, we have had no other beneficiaries engaged in this LIFE project besides the conservation NGOs, which makes it challenging to push the competent authorities for active engagement, because they don't have commitments in the project. Multilateral environmental agreements such as the CMS and the Bern Convention oblige the governments of the contracting parties to step up against IKB effectively, but these engagements are voluntary, and the consequences of non-compliance are weak. Nonetheless, the partnership has played a significant role to explain, inform and hold the national authorities accountable to these international requirements, especially to the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030.

When we weigh up each of our direct conservation actions, to see what went well and what we didn't manage to achieve, we can say with peace of mind that we have had achievements in all of the actions. However, after the negative signs, I list points which we failed to fully tackle or improve, or challenges that we did not seem to fully respond to during the implementation period. We will use these negative experiences to learn from them and solve them.

Direct Conservation Actions:

In the following two tables, we compare the results achieved so far with our objectives and expected outcomes. The first table shows our project actions grouped by topic against the foreseen results in the Grant Agreement. The second table gives a closer look at the main conservation actions (preparatory actions + direct conservation actions) with a brief highlight on the most important positive and negative results. (*see next pages*)

Monitoring actions (A1, A2, B2, C2)			
<i>Objectives / Expected outcomes</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Estimated Impact (absolute values) in 2021-2022</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
<p>Scale, impacts and causes for IKB are known</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result 1: systematic IKB monitoring extended to min. 60% of blackspots by 2021 (<i>achieved</i>) • Result 8: min. 30% reduction by 2021 in IKB compared to 2015 baseline (<i>achieved, thanks to the enormous reduction in Cyprus. Compared with project start the reduction rate is lower, but managed to keep it at this reduced level</i>) 	<p>Monitoring protocols have been developed, updated, shared and harmonized to some extent. Passive acoustic monitoring was carried out in 2021 and 2022 on six Ionian islands with 10 devices. The international workshop on IKB monitoring and an expert meeting on databases were organized successfully. Partners recruited and trained volunteers in all project countries. Seven illegal hunting hides were removed in Croatia in collaboration with protected area rangers. BIOM made the protocol for these illegal infrastructure removals.</p>	<p>Cyprus: In autumn 2015 the estimated number of birds trapped within the survey area in Cyprus was 1,6 million birds. After 2016, there was a significant drop of 85%. Due to the law relaxation in Dec 2020, BLCy recorded an increase in bird trapping levels in 2021. [Estimated ind. birds 2015-16: 1.7 million, 2018: 250k, 2021: 600k]</p> <p>Croatia: Monitoring effort was largely extended at project sites: Neretva delta (10%→100%), Zadar (1%→40%), Zagreb (0%→15%), Bjeovar-Bjilogora (0%→8%) [Mean estimated ind. birds 2018: ~55k quail, ~100k coot, 2022: 38.5k quail, 80 k coot]</p>	<p>The monitoring methodology and the volunteer engagement have improved, as foreseen. The monitored area in Greece and Croatia were expanded significantly, while the activities were maintained in Italy and Cyprus. The IKB trends were much impacted by other factors, such as the indirect effects of Covid-19 (on enforcement, hunting tourism, pet trade etc.) and legislative changes (e.g. law relaxation in Cyprus). We could mostly record decreasing IKB trends at the monitored areas, with an average reduction of 25-30% at these blackspot sites over the implementation period. However, we have very limited information about the effects on the adjacent areas that were less controlled and out of the scope of our monitoring activities. Compared to the 2015 baseline, there was a huge improvement in Cyprus</p>

		<p>Italy: maintained the monitoring effort and decrease in IKB recorded in South Sardinia (approx. by 12% and in Rome Province by approx. 50%)</p>	<p>that had an industrial scale of IKB. Lower but continuous progress was recorded in Italy and Croatia. In Greece, the baseline did not originate from objective monitoring program, the expert estimate was a mean 106 000 individual birds killed/year for the Ionian islands (the worst blackspot in the country). The monitoring was carried out on 6 islands only and showed an improving trend in IKB, however this may also be due to the decline in the number of Turtle Doves passing through the islands.</p>
<p>Governments monitor and report on IKB cases to CMS, BernC, EC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result 3: min 25 % priority governments completing MIKT scoreboards (<i>achieved</i>) 	<p>Achieving transparency in scoreboard reporting: BirdLife successfully advocated for including a clause for permitting online publication of the full report on the BernC website. In 2020 all project partner countries managed to get their government to submit scoreboards (in 2018 Cyprus did not fill it).</p>	<p>The first scoreboard assessment was conducted in 2018: 30 gov't. A second assessment was completed in 2020: 24 gov't, including all four project countries and four additional priority countries (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia) - thus 75% of our priority countries participated.</p>	<p>For the priority countries the target indicator was achieved, but the overall reporting willingness decreased with -20%. CMS fails to keep up the pressure on the governments between the meetings. Changes in the scoreboard reporting has been recently approved with the intention to simplify the process, but the next occasion to test it is going to happen in 2023. Most governments have failed to set their baseline IKB indicators and their system for monitoring the trends (besides number of legal cases)– NGO data will continue to fill this gap.</p>

Communication actions (A4, B4, B5, B8, D1, D2, D4, D5)			
<i>Objectives / Expected outcomes</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Estimated Impact (absolute values) in 2021-2022</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
<p>Public condemns and act upon IKB</p> <p>Result 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 million reached through online media campaign (<i>achieved</i>) • 150,000 people respond to call for action (<i>achieved</i>) 	<p>Our joint awareness raising campaign run for 3.5 years on several social media platforms. The broad national campaigns were also highly successful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Stop braconaggio" campaign in Italy (petition, bus stop posters, airport advertising) - Radio guerrilla campaign in Croatia - Video social ads in Greece <p>Besides these, several additional communication events and other elements were used locally on more targeted communication for special focus groups (mural, signboards, photo exhibition, summer kiosks etc.).</p> <p>Layman's report was published in the 4 project languages. Specific target groups, local community children, hunters, rangers, other relevant authorities have been educated about the significance of tackling illegal killing of birds.</p>	<p>The Flight for Survival campaign reaches were around 19 million in total for the 4 years, which - taking into account the overlaps, we still estimate to be over 5 million people reached. By the end the "Stop poaching" petition collected almost 180 000 signatures, while BL Cyprus' petition against the law relaxation was signed by more than 13 700. The project's website had almost half a million visits. We reached about 3.500 school children with through our environmental education program.</p>	<p>The awareness raising campaign - which was jointly financed in cooperation with the MAVA-funded Safe Flyways project - was outstandingly efficient. The originally foreseen indicators (3M reaches, 40k respond to action) were exceeded by the time of the Mid-term report, therefore we set ourselves more ambitious goal, which were also surpassed by the end of the project. We created a brand around the "Flight for Survival" campaign, that we want to continue using during the after-LIFE period for our communication purposes (see the After-LIFE Plan for details). Further communication elements were added to the project (newsletter, webinars) that we have found useful and wish to maintain in the coming years.</p>

<p>Reducing demand for IKB / illegal behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result 6: pilot projects with at least 10% reduction in illegal behaviour (<i>not achieved</i>) 	<p>The opinion poll surveys specifically targeting questions on behavioural change did not show significant differences in behavioural change, except in Croatia where it showed a surprising deterioration.</p>	<p>In Cyprus about 16% of the adult population have eaten ambelopoulia based on the 2022 survey, a very small positive reduction compared to 2019 when this was 17%. This value in Sardinia, Italy is approx. 30%. In Croatia in 2022, 42.3% of respondents said they find tackling the IKB important, compared to 76.2% in 2019! This shows a significant reduction of public interest in nature protection.</p>	<p>While our C2 surveys did not show significant level of perception change in the adult population, it is not surprising. We were certainly aware of this old resistance and therefore our demo projects targeted rather the younger generations that are more susceptible for changing behavioural and moral patterns. However, our educational projects used “softer approach” and did not directly measure changes in illegal behaviour of children.</p>
<p>Policy actions (A3, B1, B3, B6)</p>			
<p><i>Objectives / Expected outcomes</i></p>	<p><i>Achieved</i></p>	<p><i>Estimated Impact (absolute values) in 2021-2022</i></p>	<p><i>Evaluation</i></p>
<p>EC and Secretariats of international conventions put pressure on national governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result 2: min 8 governments (including at least 4 priority countries) receiving written statements, complaints, letters, infringement cases etc. (<i>partly achieved, new</i>) 	<p>EC reacted with a harsh letter to BL Cyprus’ letter on law relaxation, EC only thanked LIPU for complaining on the stranded implementation of the NAP, HOS submitted official complaint to EC (no response yet) Biom lobbied CMS to put pressure on the government and the MoE’s promised official engagement in the process</p>	<p>The baseline already included 3 countries (Cyprus, Greece, Austria) with EC pressure about IKB when the project started. In 2019 EC called on France to stop illegal hunting methods (glue sticks and nets), urged France and Spain to step up protection of Turtle Doves. In 2020 BL Malta has collected ample of evidence on spring hunting of turtle doves and sent it to EC in an official complaint. EC called on France again. Therefore, at the time of</p>	<p>All project partners have called for international support to put pressure on their governments, as it has been proven more effective than NGO pressure alone (e.g. EU pilot process resulted in writing the Italian NAP in 2017). However, the process is very slow, and not transparent (i.e. the public/NGOs have no access to exchanges between the Commission and member states), unless it gets to the stage of opening an infringement case. Opening infringement cases on IKB currently does not seem to be in the focus of the Commission.</p>

<p><i>target since MTR were not fulfilled)</i></p>		<p>the Mid-term Report the objective seemed already reached through the cases of Spain, Malta, and France. We increased our target to 8 countries, but IKB-related EC processes unfortunately didn't get to extended to any additional countries. A big win in 2021, when ECJ ordered France to ban glue-trap hunting of songbirds.</p>	<p>A good sign that EC takes further the already on-going process against France (ECJ ruling on limesticks in 2021, most recently – after the project closure – a new call on France again to stop illegal bird hunting and capture methods (reasoned opinion in 01/2023). We hope that with the complaint submitted within this project, the pressure will also increase on the Greek government.</p>
<p>Priority governments take IKB seriously and act upon them</p>	<p>We published our policy recommendation report and shared it with the relevant stakeholders. We actively participated at all</p>	<p>The partnership took part in the MIKT3/MIKT4/MIKT5 meetings and also contributed to EU consultations regarding IKB-related policies.</p>	<p>The partnership lobbied for a strong international strategic plan and the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030 was adopted. We actively supported the process with several elements and project outcomes.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Result 4: National Action Plans or strategic priority documents approved in Greece and Croatia (<i>not achieved</i>) • Result 7: Min. 4 priority countries with significant improvements and 2 with some progress in improving enforcement structures (<i>partly achieved, indicator is subjective</i>) 	<p>CMS MIKT meetings held during the project period. We strongly represented BirdLife's position during the development of the Rome Strategic Plan, we developed a model NAP template, encouraged, and assisted governments in filling the scoreboards.</p> <p>National institutions were informed about scale and scope of illegal killing of birds in the Mediterranean.</p> <p>In Croatia, Common quail breeding season has been protected for 20 more days.</p> <p>In synergy with LIFE project Balkan Detox, some of our partners and collaborators have completed trainings at the Wildlife Crime Academy.</p>	<p>Despite of strong lobbying by HOS in Greece and BIOM in Croatia, the project failed to reach this objective.</p> <p>In Croatia, Biom advocated that a mandatory hunting bag inspections will be implemented from 2022 on fishponds for organized hunting events. We expect this to have a major impact in reducing IKB.</p> <p>Hunting law reforms have helped detection of IKB and law enforcement in several Balkan countries to. (e.g. in BiH in 2006 119 game species, in 2021 25 spp., better defined, shortened seasons for vulnerable species in Serbia, Montenegro, moratorium in Albania, daily quotas in Romania)</p>	<p>BIOM and HOS lobbied for the adoption of National Action Plans, which was not successful in either country. Italy and Cyprus both have a NAP, but the implementation hasn't been strong enough, therefore both LIPU and BL Cy tried to lobby at EU-level for more pressure on their governments.</p> <p>Priority countries where enforcement structures <u>improved</u>: Croatia (police coordinated actions with rangers, inspectors, response rate high), Serbia, Montenegro (good cooperation with police, room to improve with hunting inspectors, more problems with prosecution and judiciary), Bosnia-Herzegovina (IKB mostly linked to quail hunting, improved control)</p> <p><u>stayed the same</u>: Greece (poor enforcement: understaffed, under resourced), Italy, Slovenia</p> <p><u>worsened</u>: Cyprus (dismantlement of Anti-poaching Unit), Albania (env. inspectorate was dissolved)</p>
Networking action (D3)			
<i>Objectives / Expected outcomes</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Estimated Impact (absolute values) in 2021-2022</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>

strong professional knowledge exchange attendance to min. 5 IKB meetings	We have focused on 2 important networking aims. First, is to improve collaboration with other relevant international organizations and MEA secretariats. We have been particularly successful with IMPEL and CMS, and to a lesser extent with EUFJE. Second, to establish connections with other similar LIFE projects: the cooperation with LIFE Nature Guardians, LIFE Swipe and LIFE EuroKite resulted extremely fruitful.	We have attended to all major IKB events in Europe. The project events gathered several experts of this topic, and we use different platforms (Teams, Facebook, "lunchtime talks", occasionally WhatsApp) to maintain the information flow and sustain live connections.	The connection with BirdLife organizations in the region is naturally very good, which is a huge advantage for our sustainability and transferability aims. The now secured follow-up project will allow us to maintain this partnership beyond the LIFE ABC. Networking with other LIFE projects were often facilitated by the direct involvement of one or more BirdLife partners. We worked closely with the MAVA-funded Safe Flyways and Adriatic Flyways 4 projects, especially for organizing joint workshops, that greatly enhanced the impact of these events.
Project management actions (E actions)			
<i>Objectives / Expected outcomes</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Estimated Impact (absolute values) in 2021-2022</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
reaching project objectives together through a strong and collaborative project partnership successful implementation of the LABC project, capacity building for national cons. NGOs to work effectively against IKB.	The management team: -tracked the implementation and prepared regular reports (internal, external) -organized Steering Committee meetings -managed the partnership agreements, GA amendment -organized the monitor visits and maintained communication with the external monitor -oversaw the budget management and changes -coordinated the after-LIFE Plan	During the project we delivered over 50 deliverables and milestones. The project employed in part or in full altogether 66 employees.	The force majeure of the Covid-19 pandemic caused several delays in our workplan; therefore, we requested an 8-month extension of the project period. During the project we have managed to achieve most of the planned project results and deliver our outputs in high quality.

Overview table by project action (A and B actions only)

Action	Name of action	Status (achieved / partially achieved/ not achieved)	Evaluation
A1	Monitoring protocols	partially achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Standardized monitoring protocols. PAM in Greece. Very successful monitoring workshop. Updated “best practice guide”. - IKB case registration template cannot be harmonized, IKB baseline for RSP targets hasn’t been set in most countries
A2	Database	partially achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Successful expert meeting. Contact list of scattered national data. Database recommendation report shared with CMS - Original goal was overly ambitious. Willingness to share data is low.
A3	National Strategic Action Plans	partially achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Successful international webinar. Guideline for NGOs. Governmental engagement in the process in Croatia and to some extent in Greece - Low priority for gov’t bodies, NAP implementation dependent on gov’t funding
A4	Communication strategy	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Successful workshops to engage partners. Good coverage/reaches in general. - difficulties in reaching new audience, thus “Preaching to the converted”, Conservation impact is hard to prove except a few cases of direct reporting
B1	National Focal Points	partially achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Publication on Croatian Police gap analysis, active support to national IKB focal points (with varied level of engagement from their sides), workshops and trainings held with good feedbacks - InfoHub is too hidden, lack of political will and willingness to take actions/responsibility ->MoUs with ministry not signed (HR,GR), Greek gap analysis failed (low participation)
B2	Volunteer networks	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Successful volunteer recruitments, trainings, engagement protocols, BIOM’s new volunteer network set up <p>(Note: on Ionian islands volunteers were substituted by ARUs)</p>

B3	Improve IKB policies	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ambitious Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) adopted, shortened quail hunting season (HR), policy recommendations published, improved fishpond management plan policies (HR), improved new ECD - law relaxation (CY), failed to increase IKB fines (IT), RSP implementation behind schedule, international pressure from EC/MEAs is too weak
B4	Engage with key stakeholders ("user")	mostly achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + educational materials & methods developed can be used in the after-LIFE -original "user" engagement strategies were severely affected by Covid-19, thus some end-user groups (e.g. restaurant owners, pet shops) had to be omitted
B5	Demonstration projects	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + great engagement from schools, simulation (role-playing) game for high school students, good engagement with rangers and hunters in HR - no data to what extent this sensitization is transposed from the younger generation to the older
B6	National enforcement teams	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + enforcement protocols are in place for relevant enforcement authorities, knowledge transfer about illegal hunting hide removal (HR), raid on huge trapping site (CY) -failed to improve cooperation between enforcement bodies, IMPEL's difficulties (financial, human capacity) resulted in inaction for its IKB inspections, stranded NAP implementations -> governmental changes had the most negative effect in delaying actions (even more so, than Covid measures)
B7	Project catalogue (pilot initiatives)	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + successful project design workshop, some smaller national IKB projects and a big international follow-up project have received funding - project catalogue quickly gets out of date
B8	Awareness raising campaign	achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + adapting to more online communication, good outreach, highly successful national campaigns, diverse tools (murals, bus stop ads, summer kiosks etc.) - increasingly expensive to reach new audience, positive impact on people's behaviour could not be proven by our surveys

Effectiveness of the dissemination activities

The communication activities were coordinated in line with the annual communication workplans developed nationally and jointly each year. The project's joint awareness raising campaign, called "Flight for Survival" was a collaborative partnership effort to raise awareness about the illegal killing of birds along the African-Eurasian flyway. The campaign was coordinated by BirdLife Europe, but the stories were authored and further shared by the partners. We published the articles with an intensive social media presence during the peak migration periods. The campaign gathered over 19.5 million social media reaches and generated a traffic of cc. 448 000 visitors to the project's website.

We do not have exact numbers about the radio/TV outreach, but the TV/radio interviews and appearances exceeded 100 occasions in total for the 4 project countries. The biggest national campaigns clearly reached several millions of people. We released 108 press releases for online and offline news portals and newspapers.

	2019	2020	2021	2022 spring
FB reaches	7,855,767	3,172,939	2,955,317	1,023,950
Instagram reach	2,295,905	566,160	101,009	107,534
Twitter impression	956,194	299,260	243,551	88,725
FFS Website visit	185,117	54,076	182,520	26,281
TOTAL online reach	11,295,002	4,094,455	3,484,418	1,246,490

Note: The first year was supported with online advertisement. The 2020 was greatly affected by Covid-19, especially the spring campaign. In 2022, the campaign ran only during the spring season.

The educational outreach programme (included under B5 demonstration projects) has grown. In Cyprus, it exceeded our goal of 1500 children reached each year. BLCy has developed various materials and has a dedicated section 'Fun and learning' on its website where teachers, families and kids can find various programmes and activities around nature and birds.

HOS' environmental education team held seminars for teachers as well as educational activities with pupils at schools and public events, providing them with the knowledge and means to cultivate empathy and a stronger feeling of care about the imminent threats to wildlife. As a result, the youngest generations will be enabled to change the traditions that remain deeply embedded in their communities' way of life and family lifestyles through knowledge.

Combined, the TV and radio spots created under the communication campaign were estimated to have reached over 2,000,000 people, meaning 1/5 of the country's population. The TV and radio spots will be used again in the future to continue to raise awareness on the issue and to encourage more people to report incidents of illegal trapping and trade.

Association BIOM ran an extensive and comprehensive media campaign regarding illegal killing of birds with the main focus on the Quail poaching. The campaign consisted of many different elements:

- During the whole project period, illegal killing of birds made it on to the mainstream media channels eight times in total, including TV news, talk-shows and morning television.
- BIOM released a guerrilla radio campaign on 44 radio stations in Croatia. An ironic and powerful message about poaching using illegal calling devices was aired for one week three times a day. The campaign had a full national reach.
- The LIFE ABC project was continuously mentioned alongside the IKB topic in all newspapers, news portals and thematic magazine for hunters.

LIPU displayed an illustrative poster on the #stopbraccooning campaign for 14 days in 20 bus shelters in Cagliari. At the Cagliari airport a short clip was spreading the #stoppoaching message projected in the departure hall for the entire month of July 2022. The number of views reached at the airport is equal to the number of travellers, considering that the video is broadcast in a visible location that all passengers need to pass by. The estimate, calculated on 2019 data, is approximately 280,000 people reached. (Unfortunately, the operator company of the bus shelters was unable to provide an equivalent estimate.)

Policy impact

At the international level, attendance of the LABC partners to the CMS MIKT meetings was very useful to support the adoption of the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-30 targets and objectives. The Rome Strategic Plan was adopted by the Bern Convention in December 2019 and approved by the MIKT member states during the summer of 2020. BLCy successfully organized on the 8-9 March 2021 an online workshop regarding the development of a National Action Plan. A direct outcome of this workshop was a relevant guidance document developed by the LABC project partners, which was shared with the MIKT coordinator and was included in the reading materials of the MIKT4 held on 9-11 June 2021. Besides building and sharing our NAP template (A3), the project team further supported the implementation of the RSP, e.g. by presenting the updated monitoring guidelines at the CMS technical workshop (A1) and accepting the invitation to share the results of the database study at the MIKT5 meeting (A2).

The policy team responded to the public consultation of the Commission, which was launched between 10/10/2019 – 02/01/2020 on the evaluation of the ECD. BirdLife Europe, on behalf of the partnership, participated at this open consultation opportunity and participated in a meeting between DG Justice and DG Environment with NGOs on the evaluation of the ECD. The joint NGO lobbying for a strong revised ECD is still on-going.

At national levels: the project supported the work of the governmental focal points, keeping them informed about the MIKT process. Partners encouraged the government officers to engage in the meetings and to fill in the scoreboard assessment.

In Greece, upon successful lobbying initiated by HOS, the first Local Action Plan against the illegal activity of spring hunting in the Ionian islands and western Greece was created in 2020. The LAPs were formulated upon consultation with the competent authorities (Ministry of Environment, Forestry Service, Game Service, Management Bodies etc.). Based on this circular, the local Forest Directorates are obliged to draft and implement action plans for the effective patrolling of the areas of island complexes of Zante and Corfu, and the implementation of the law on spring IKB, when needed. HOS has been lobbying the ministry to use the LAPs in the Ionian Islands as a pilot case in order to speed up the same strategy in other known blackspots in Greece, where IKB is rampant.

Furthermore, a Strategic Complaint was formally submitted to the European Commission (DG ENV) in connection to violations of Directive 2009/147/EC. The mentioned violations include, among other issues, the illegal killing of birds in Greece and the inclusion of species in unfavourable conservation status (threatened) in the annual Ministerial Decision that regulates hunting.

In Croatia, BIOM's initiated meetings between the State Inspectorate (Nature Protection Inspection) and the Ministry of Environment and Energy (Directorate for Nature Protection) to facilitate the conversation about cooperation against IKB and the creation of a National Action Plan. The NAP negotiations progressed slowly and hasn't yet reached the stage of adopting a NAP.

Thanks to the LIFE ABC project efforts, Quail shooting in season was shortened with 20 days. It is a result of the advocacy campaign "Black August" that ran in September 2019. Association BIOM advocated for the Quail shooting season to be in line with the key concepts of article 7 (4) of Directive 79/409/EEC. As Quail poaching season strictly follows shooting season, this action decreased IKB in Croatia by an estimated 20.000 fewer Common quails shot per year.

The project will have a long-term impact on the strategic approach to tackling illegal killing of birds in protected areas management authorities in Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Istria County, Međimurje County and Varaždin County. As a result of joint direct conservation action on the Drava River, poaching was recognized as a real issue to wintering bird populations by PI Međimurje Nature, PI Varaždin County and Regional Hunting Societies of Varaždin and Međimurje Counties. PI Međimurje Nature organized a round table on hunting. Hunters and BIOM jointly agreed an action plan for Nature2000 management plan with a big emphasis on IKB monitoring and raising awareness campaign amongst hunters. BIOM has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Public Institution for Management of protected areas in Dubrovnik-Neretva County (PI Dubrovnik-Neretva) on joint efforts to protect wetlands of the Neretva Delta. In the action plan PI Dubrovnik-Neretva and BIOM agreed to conduct joint actions for monitoring and tackling of illegal killing of birds in the ornithological reserve. BIOM has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Public Institution for Management of protected areas in Istrian County (PI Natura Histrica) on joint efforts to protect wetland of the ornithological reserve "Palud". PI Natura Histrica and BIOM agreed on joint IKB monitoring.

In scope of the project, Association BIOM produced an educational brochure for police officers about the illegal killing of birds. The brochure includes the most important knowledge about the issue – legislation, most common IKB types, poachers' modus operandi and photographs of the most commonly used poaching tools. The brochure was distributed to all police stations in Croatia. BIOM has also translated BirdLife's "A best practice guide for monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds" into Croatian, printed it and distributed to all the public institutions for management of protected areas in Croatia.

In Italy, LIPU's online petition directly asked the government for improvement of the sanctioning framework for illegal killing of wildlife. The petition had a very successful awareness raising campaign linked to it. However, due to the governmental crisis in Italy and the changes in the ministry, the political environment has changed for the worse and this demand to improve the laws have not been adequately met.

In Cyprus the legislation worsened after the parliament approved a reduction in the fines for bird poaching of certain protected species. Unfortunately, BirdLife Cyprus' continuous attempts to reverse this law relaxation has been unsuccessful until now.

Main barriers identified and the action(s) undertaken to overcome them

One of the big barriers we faced during the implementation of the project was the “lack of political will”, by which we mean the repeated inaction and negligence of the relevant governmental institutions. Governmental institutions have been reluctant to start the process of developing a national action plan for the eradication of the IKB, therefore we failed to deliver the NAP both in Croatia and Greece. For instance, HOS has repeatedly requested information and meetings from the Ministry of Energy and Environment (MEEN) most of which remained unanswered. As IKB is still not considered as a high priority crime in many of the targeted countries, many of the government officials (national focal points) stayed away from the international meetings or joined without preparation and real input. HOS assumes that the reasons are: the fact that the relevant department of the MEEN is understaffed and the strong pressure from the Hellenic Hunters Confederation on MEEN’s leadership. The problem was partly overcome by finding synergies with the BalkanDetox LIFE and LIFE SWiPE projects, which help to bring together relevant stakeholders and to establish the working group for wildlife crime. We believe that it will be possible to extend the Anti-poisoning Action Plans by including measures against other types of IKB.

Another critical barrier to successfully implementing the project was undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic. These unprecedented conditions did not allow our partners to carry out many of the actions that were scheduled. In order to overcome these truly adverse conditions that suspended travel, events, environmental education actions etc., we mostly organized webinars and online workshops in 2020 and in the first half of 2021. In Italy, online education was also employed. In Croatia, it was overcome by the development and inclusion of the educational programme into BIOM’s Ornithological Camp “Učka 2021”. BIOM organized ornithological ringing camp and a big part of its educational programme focused on direct threats to migratory birds. This proved so successful, that it is now part of the regular program of the Ornithological Camp on Učka.

One unfortunate development during the project period was the law relaxations passed by the Cyprus Parliament in December 2020, regarding, lowering the fines from 2000 to 200 euros for the shooting or trapping with limesticks of up to 50 songbirds. BirdLife Cyprus spent a considerable amount of time advocating for the rejection of these dangerous law relaxations; however, the pro-hunting and pro-trapping lobbies were able to push successfully for these law changes to be passed. BLCy was very vocal against these law changes, arguing that such low, non-deterrent fines will make things worse for the illegal killing of songbirds. As expected, following this law relaxation, BLCy has already observed a worsening of the situation. In a bid to reverse these law changes, BLCy gathered more than 13,700 signatures from an electronic petition, calling on the Cyprus government to make all IKB fines high and deterrent. These signatures were handed over to the President of Cyprus Parliament in late November 2021. The petition was accompanied by a letter from BirdLife International endorsed by 22 BirdLife partners in Europe, expressing their concerns and calling on the President of the Parliament to take action to protect our common natural heritage. Sadly, the Cyprus Parliament President has not taken any corrective measures regarding these law relaxations.

6.4 Analysis of benefits

6.4.1 Environmental benefits

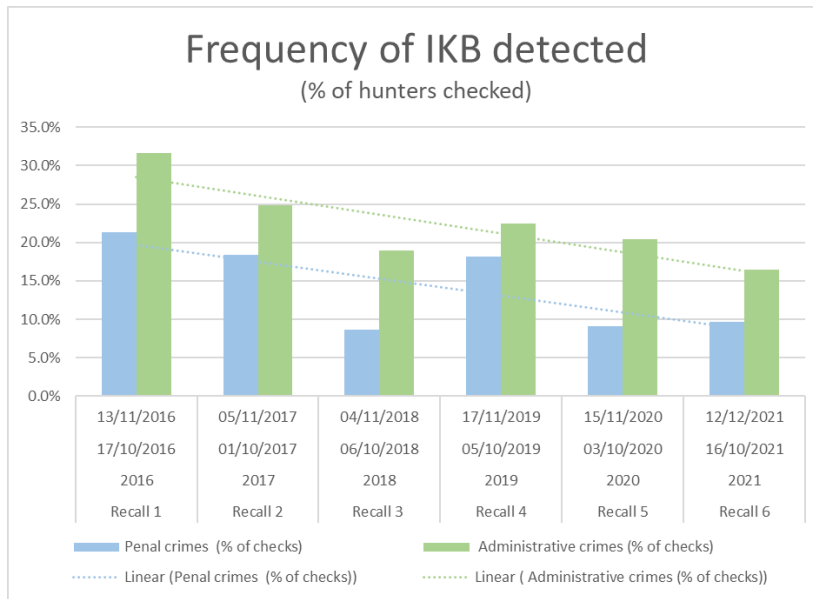
The project targets to reach a min. 30% reduction in IKB on the project's blackspot sites, therefore directly saving at least 50-100 000 individual birds per year.

In Cyprus: Based on the data gathered from our field monitoring, we can say that in recent years we have achieved a significant reduction in illegal bird trapping, particularly within the Dhekelia Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA). This is a great achievement and a huge conservation success, resulting in the saving of hundreds of thousands of migratory birds.

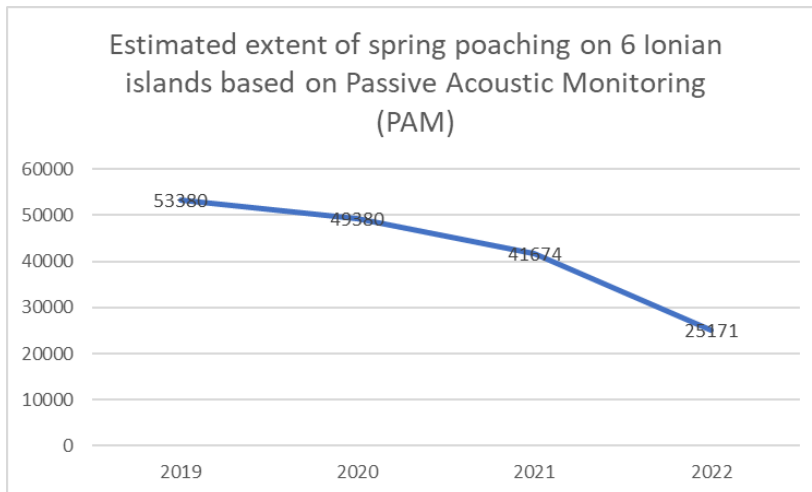
Autumn periods	Estimated number of birds trapped	
	Birds caught within survey area (no)	Birds caught across Cyprus (no)
2015	1.687.386	2.249.847
2016	1.711.423	2.281.897
2017	458.423	611.231
2018	251.640	335.520
2019	442.395	589.860
2020	294.165	392.220
2021	604.463	805.950

The decrease in illegal bird trapping levels since 2016 is noticeable, however we cannot also hide away from the fact that the law changes passed by the Cyprus Parliament in December 2020 have, as expected, caused a deterioration in the bird trapping situation.

In Italy: Operation Recall was started by the Lipu volunteer guards and involves the provincial command of the CUFA (the special Branch of Carabinieri dealing with wildlife crimes). Operation 'Recall' aims at fighting the use of electronic call and recorders. The checks are not random but targeted toward hunters suspected of using electronic lures (tape recorders). The guards then approach the hunters, identify themselves and start the check. Administrative or penal relevant infractions are dealt by the CUFA staff. The effectiveness (measured as number of fines raised and crime reports filed by the police), clearly indicated that the phenomenon still exists but, due to the widespread control of the territory and the formal complaints made over the years, the trend is significantly decreasing. From 2016 to 2021, the observed frequency of penal crimes has decreased from 21,4% to 9,7%, while that of the administrative sanctions from 31,6% to 16,4%.



In Greece: During the implementation of the project, innovative tools such as Acoustic Recording Units (ARUs) were used to record illegal hunting for the very first time in Greece. Under this action, systematic monitoring of the illegal spring hunting of the Turtle dove took place in the Ionian Islands. Robust data and evidence of the magnitude of this illegal phenomenon were obtained through the ARUs. It is essential to note that up until the use of ARUs, data on illegal spring hunting were completely lacking, as can also be seen in the relevant reports of the competent authorities. An important result was also the identification of the intensity of illegal hunting in a spatial level, a crucial element to design more specific and concrete conservation actions in the future, along with targeted communication and policy actions.



In Croatia: As a long-term result of the project, it is expected illegal killing of Common quail to decrease by approximately 20,000 quails per year. Breeding season is protected from shooting for 20 more days than it was in 2018. It is a direct result of BIOM's engagement in public consultation for a new rule book for hunting season in Croatia.

Approximately 2,000 of Common quails saved per year after suspension of usage of calling devices in 3 sites (hunting grounds: Zelendvor, Gornji Draganec and Komuševački Lug – Bukovina). It has been established that after continuous reporting of the illegal killing of birds to the police, in three sites calling devices were not found during the last 2 hunting seasons. It is a long-term result of the police reports submitted by BIOM staff and volunteers in years 2018-2020.

As we estimate that 22,000 birds less will be killed per year, as an additional benefit we estimate that the amount of lead shot dispersed in Croatian grasslands per year will be reduced by over 2300 kg!

The project benefits the project areas with an increase of capacities and understanding for detecting IKB. The scope of the problem of illegal killing of birds was addressed towards relevant national institutions, such as protected areas management authorities, police, nature protection inspectorate and ministry officers.

6.4.2 Economic benefits

The project has been providing jobs directly for 43 persons that cumulatively are equal to 12.72 (FTE) full time jobs. We want to maintain this human capacity in the after-LIFE period, and thanks to a new project, we are likely to succeed in doing so. Majority of the staff is qualified to at least secondary education, but typically higher. The project was also supported by volunteers engaging in monitoring work and information sharing (e.g. in the summer kiosks). The subcontractors of the project have been contacted to an amount of 265,200 euros during the reporting period, involving experts from highly specialized fields, such as database-management, sound analysis, socio-economics and covert surveillance work.

Some of the new technologies that we piloted with (e.g. the automated sound recorders, hidden cameras) are estimated to be cheaper in the long run and more reliable, than human observers.

In Croatia, the better protection of Common quail due to the shortened hunting season will positively affect quail hunting as there will be better reproductive success of the species. According to official hunting data, there is approximately 12,000 pairs of quails breeding in Croatia. It will positively affect game management and could potentially benefit from hunting tourism.

6.4.3 Social benefits

For permanent results, we must change behaviour and attitude toward long-held traditions of local communities. LIPU had started this educational work in other places in Sardinia already before the current project and seeing the results, we have transferred this soft approach to other parts of Sardinia, Cyprus and the Ionian islands (Corfu, Zante).

BLCy commissioned polls in 2019 and 2022, with the help of a consultancy, in order to better understand and to develop a profile of the consumers of songbirds (ambelopoulia). Based on the respondents' replies in 2022, in Cyprus about 16% of the adult population replied that they had eaten ambelopoulia, a small positive reduction compared to 2019 when this was 17%. In terms of total number of consumers, this would be equivalent to a reduction from about 117,000 to 110,000 adult individuals during this period (based on 2019 population census statistics). The consumers, on average, are predominantly male, between 36-55 years old, they are or were hunters, they live in the trapping hotspot areas or in Nicosia, and they typically meet at home with other friends to consume the so-called traditional ambelopoulia delicacy, a few times per year. The

positive, yet small decrease, might indicate that the anti-trapping campaign, including the LABC awareness raising actions, have had an impact in the right direction in Cyprus.

In Croatia, based on the results of the national opinion polls on IKB, the general public's knowledge about illegal killing of birds has been raised. In 2022, 60.0% of respondents replied that they believe the experts' estimation of the scale of IKB in Croatia, compared to 42.3% in 2019. Similarly, 17.1% of respondents did not believe the experts' estimation in 2022, compared to 36.6% in 2019. On the other hand, 42.3% responded in 2022 that tackling IKB is a high priority, compared to 76.2% in 2019. This is likely at least partly attributable to a shift of perceived priorities due to outside factors such as the pandemic, war in Europe and the challenges facing the Croatian economy.

It was also evident that our awareness raising campaigns led to greater awareness among the general public that these practices consist of an illegal activity. This in turn resulted in an increase in the reporting of such crimes. In Greece, during the first quarter of 2022 HOS detected a 30% increase in the reporting of illegal bird trapping and trade. In Croatia, BIOM also could link direct law enforcement interventions thanks to reporting of ethical citizens following its radio campaign.

6.4.4 Replicability, transferability, cooperation

This project facilitates cooperation with key government institutions in all project countries and also with other concerned NGOs in fighting the illegal killing of wildlife. This regional cooperation in itself gives an international attention to the enforcement of the relevant regulations, and this reflects in the changing attitude of the most important stakeholder groups (police, jurists etc.) to take the issue of IKB more seriously.

The best examples for this collaborative approach can be seen in Italy, with the joint operations with police, or in Cyprus, where cooperation between the SBA officers and environmental NGOs, like BirdLife Cyprus and RSPB, bear tangible results in terms of reduction in levels of illegal bird trapping. In Greece, HOS cooperated with the Forestry Service of the project areas, in the framework of the LAPs against spring poaching of the Turtle Dove, in order to provide them with the reports they make following their patrols. We promote this approach to be developed in other countries with similar wildlife problems, as a successful best-case study, but also for national lobbying for other enforcement agencies to adopt a similar approach.

In Croatia, seven illegal structures used for waterbird poaching were removed from Donja Dubrava hydroelectric reservoir in Natura 2000 site "Dravske akumulacije" in 2021. The government institutions, primarily public institutions managing the protected areas, have also engaged a range of other institutions to support the removal of illegal hides, including the Nature Protection Inspection, Hunting Inspection, police and Croatian Mountain Rescue Service. Biom transferred knowledge to the Protected Areas Management Authority "Međimurje Nature", which organized action and engaged other stakeholders. Together with the rangers BIOM developed a protocol for the removal of poaching hides. The protocol was shared with the Nature Protection Directorate and all ranger services in Croatia. Similar replicability can be expected to take place in Croatia in the coming years as BIOM continues cooperating with the public institutions for protected area management.

We have closely cooperated with other conservation projects aiming for similar goals. There is a special collaboration with the Safe Flyways project (financed by the MAVA Foundation), which contributes to our project not only financially (through co-funding), but also by amplifying our impact, as it is shown in the case of the Flight for Survival campaign or the joint workshop. The cooperation with the LIFE Nature Guardians project enables us to exchange knowledge on professional experience, because some of their activities are similar, while their geographical area covers Spain and Portugal.

The project has good replicability potential, regionally, at EU level and beyond, especially in EU candidate countries, Middle East and North Africa, where the illegal killing of migrating songbird is also a big issue. Thanks to a new donor, BirdLife International has managed to secure a multi-million-euro project against IKB for the next 5 years. This will enable us to broaden the work involving partners from the wider Mediterranean region. Continued focus is needed at all organizational and political levels to consolidate our successes. The project's foundations of strengthened capacity, increased awareness, and actionable knowledge offer an opportunity to continue substantially reducing IKB in the Mediterranean through further implementation of our activities. We will also continue working in the project countries, the main planned activities are: the IKB monitoring (continuing or repeating in 4-5 years, depending on location), advocacy-policy work (NAP, supporting governments to implement the Rome Strategic Plan), and communication-education (as outlined in the After-LIFE Plan). Geographically the new IKB project will involve partners in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Northern Macedonia, Palestine, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

6.4.5 Best Practice lessons

The project applied several best practice conservation measures, such as:

- IKB monitoring schemes
- Educational activities
- Targeted communication with highly specialized “end-user groups”
- Involvement of volunteers
- Joint patrolling and covert surveillance work
- Poaching infrastructure removal from protected areas

Lessons learnt from these practices are outlined under each actions concerned and detailed in the annexed deliverables, but we wish to highlight some of the examples about how we propagate the use of these best practices:

- Our surveillance programme in Cyprus got in BLI's ‘State of the World's Birds’ publication as a case study for solving IKB problems. Three new case studies (on passive acoustic monitoring, on hide removal and on volunteer engagement) were included in the revised version of the “Best practice guide in IKB monitoring” (see annex A1).
- Probably the most useful benefit of the Covid-era was that our partners gained considerable knowledge in online education. Organising webinars for both pupils and teachers has been explored and will be used in the future, especially for remote areas. BirdLife Europe and BirdLife International will maintain the regular communication with partners through

online tools that we created within the project (infohub, “Hatch” platform, FaceBook group, “lunchtime talk” webinars, newsletter), which serve the purpose of continuous knowledge exchange among conservation professionals.

- Monitoring practices can be carefully transferred to other locations (new blackspots) or other countries. New project partners are already seeking advice on how to detect/monitor IKB. For example, Turkey wants to explore covert surveillance with camera traps on some frequented IKB hotspots, and practical experience from Cyprus on placement and disguise of the equipment is crucial for the success. HOS has gained expertise of using Acoustic Recording Units (ARUs) to monitor hunting during this project. The ARUs will be implemented again in future projects as their use have several advantages.
- Regarding the communication aspects of the project, it was confirmed that the means must be carefully tailored to reach the target group. For example, in Croatia, the radio was chosen for the campaign based on a previous survey proving that the focus group (men between the ages of 50-65, living in the countryside) are more likely to listen to the radio, as opposed to other forms of media.

6.4.6 Innovation and demonstration value

The international workshop and the amended guidelines on IKB monitoring focused on methodology recommendations and presented new technologies as case studies to serve as best practice examples. The use of ARUs is already piloted by HOS within the project to record shots during spring, which is closed (non-hunting) season for migrating songbirds. HOS already considers employing passive acoustic monitoring in other blackspots of illegal killing in the country. The data that is gathered under this monitoring could act as a proof that illegal hunting is rampant in Greece and consequently a serious pressure to the birds’ populations. This technique has also big potential to be used in Croatia on protected fishponds against illegal hunting of wildfowl. BirdLife Cyprus in cooperation with RSPB and SBA Police have been successful in recording illegal activities by cover surveillance cameras, which has also more potential to be used elsewhere for detecting IKB and collecting evidence.

The volunteer involvement in the project strongly builds on LIPU’s experience from a previous LIFE project and was successfully transferred to the other national partners. Association BIOM successfully developed a volunteer network for monitoring and tackling illegal killing of birds. To encourage local environmental activism, BIOM organized volunteering meetings - workshops, during which volunteers were educated about problems of IKB (law, when it happens, how to recognize it and how to report it to authorities). In only one year (2021), BIOM educated 24 volunteers, who checked over 100 locations, reported 9 IKB cases which resulted with 6 calling devices being confiscated and 2 poachers prosecuted, and have had an increasingly strong retentive effect.

The innovative elements of our educational activities (e.g. including improvisational drama play /HOS/, simulation game /BIOM/) have been received very well by the students and teachers alike. These activities are an innovative tool to engage young people and raise their awareness about the IKB and how each of them can contribute – while perhaps indirectly educating their families, too.

6.4.7 Policy implications

Actions A3, B1 and B3 specifically target policy implications, as described in detail earlier.

The project indirectly contributes to implementation of the 'EU Policy Cycle'. This plan recognized environmental crime as one of the EU's ten priorities for the fight against serious and organized crime during the 2018-2021 policy cycle. In May 2021, BirdLife and other environmental NGOs successfully lobbied for environmental crime to continue to remain a priority in the 2022-2025 cycle.

The revision of the Environmental Crime Directive (ECD) has been ongoing throughout the project's implementation period. BirdLife Europe joined the alliance with other "green" NGOs with a wildlife focus, such as EEB, WWF, IFAW, BornFree etc. to coordinate the advocacy campaign. BirdLife Europe has played a key role to inform national BirdLife partner organizations (through e-mails and meetings of the Nature Task Force) about the developments and encouraging the national-level lobbying. In autumn 2022, the European Commission proposed a position that took in many of the points recommended by the green NGOs. However, the Member States' position is trying to water down the proposal while the NGO consortium continues to advocate to in the background by direct and indirect communication. EP JURI and the Parliament plenary are due to vote on the position in early 2023.

The project contributed to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020, then continued to support the 2030 Biodiversity strategy under the European Green Deal and the related Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as implementation of nature conservation legislation of the EU.

The project substantially contributed to the implementation of the Tunis Action Plan 2011-2020, and its follow-up, the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030. Even to the extent that the project partnership participated at the debate of the draft strategic plan at the MIKT3 meeting, and also at the subsequent consultations. Furthermore, to facilitate the National Action Plan process, we shared the draft NAP format with the CMS, Bern Convention and AEWAS Secretariats and it served as a background document at the MIKT4 meeting. Our database recommendations were presented at the MIKT5 meeting by our external expert.

The project offered a great opportunity for partners to get involved in the procedures of MIKT towards the direction of the targets set by Rome Strategic Plan and to advocate for improved national IKB enforcement. The Greek government was the least willing to take action against bird crime, but the project team was constantly pushing and, in the end, achieved the implementation of LAPs in the project sites on a yearly basis. HOS expects that the submission of the Strategic Complaint and a consequent reaction of the EC will further motivate the Greek state to effectively combat the crime against wild birds.

In Croatia, because of the project, the Common quail shooting season became shorter with 20 days. Thanks to this change, breeding season of Common quail is better protected. As, in general, Common quail poaching does not occur outside of the shooting/hunting season, change is expected to have a significant impact on breeding population in Croatia.

Association BIOM contributed to multiple management plans of protected areas and Natura 2000 sites. Thanks to BIOM's engagement in the development of the management plan for the "Mura-Drava" Regional Park, it was agreed by rangers and hunters to include joint IKB monitoring patrols, bird identification courses for hunters (to minimize protected species killing) and education about lead poisoning and lead shot ban in wetlands in the action plan for hunting.

Activities were agreed by representatives of multiple hunting associations and two regional hunting societies.

Since the project started, association BIOM has alerted authorities to the problem of illegal killing of birds on fishponds. As a result of policy work done by BIOM and partner organization Croatian Society for Birds and Nature Protection, in 2021, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development included hunting bag checks by authorized ornithologists as a necessary measure against IKB in the appropriate assessment of the hunting management plan for the “Brezovičke našice” carp fishpond. It is expected that measure will be repeated in decisions for other fishponds in the future.

7 Key Project-level Indicators

Reduction in illegal killing of birds	Scalable (%) reduction of numbers of birds being illegally killed per year in demonstration sites in priority countries	There was an estimated reduction in KB at the project site on average between 25-30%. Cyprus already showed a significant improvement since the baseline set in 2015 (90%). There was a slight increase in 2020-21 due to law relaxation and decreased control in the field. (Details discussed under Action A1)
Awareness raising	Number of people exposed to information and communication messages during the project	Exceeded the provisional indicator of 3,000,000 individuals reached, with the total online reaches being over 19 million people. (Detailed reporting in Annex D4.)
Websites	Websites: Visits to the project website and the Illegal Killing websites of project partners	The target was set for 200,000 visits. According to the website statistics, we reached 447 994 individual visits for the Flight for Survival website (www.flightforsurvival.org).
Online Resource	Online Illegal Killing Resource Extranet and Database	The online IKB information hub was created under BLI's DataZone. The BirdLife's internal extranet has been replaced by the new “Hatch” platform – an online forum restricted to the BL partnership. The Bird Crime Database was not created due to reasons explained under Action A2.
Behavioural change	Number of entities/individuals changing behaviour	Exceeded the original target of 40,000 people responding to calls for action. LIPU's online petition “Stop poaching” – supported by other project partners - got signed by more than 180 000 people. Cyprus collected 13,780 signatures.
Government response	No of priority countries with Strategic National Priorities to address IKB endorsed by governments	Original target was 4 priority countries with endorsed NAPs, thus 2 new in addition to Italy and Cyprus. Despite of our efforts, the project has failed to reach this goal.

<p>Government response</p>	<p>No. of priority countries with adequate or improving enforcement structures</p>	<p>The enforcement structure in Cyprus significantly declined with the dismantlement of the specialized Anti-poaching Police Unit. The cooperation with SBE Police (in Cyprus) and with Carabinieri -CUPA (in Italy) remained fruitful. Enforcement has improved in Croatia and hopefully will continue to do so with the stricter fishpond management plans. Unfortunately, no significant improvement was registered in Greece. The situation in the non-project priority countries is also complex, with signs of improvement in various Balkan countries, but information is not complete and subjective.</p>
<p>Government response</p>	<p>No. governments receiving pressure from Conventions/EC through written statements, formal letters, complaints, infringement sent out to governments by conventions/EC</p>	<p>We claimed to have reached the originally targeted 6 countries at the time of the MTR and set out a new, more ambitious goal of 8 countries receiving significant international pressure. In 2019 EC called on France to stop illegal hunting methods (glue sticks and nets), urged France and Spain to step up protection of Turtle Doves. In 2020 BL Malta has collected ample of evidence on spring hunting of turtle doves and sent an official complaint to EC. EC sent letter to Cypriot government based on evidence received from BL Cyprus. HOS submitted an official complaint in 2022 (no information about any response yet). Therefore, taking into account the original baseline (Cyprus, Greece, Austria) and the additional new countries (Spain, France, Malta), we did not manage to extend this target any further after the Mid-term Report's stage, but we hope that as a result of our recent complaint, the EC will take up the case against the Greek government again.</p>

KPI online tool has been updated with the revised end values. Final snapshot was submitted after feedbacks of the monitor on previous draft version. The reference after-LIFE period was set as 3 years after the end of the project, thus until 31/10/2025. During this period, the consortium will receive funding from a private foundation to continue its anti-IKB work. Therefore, the financial background to maintain the project's achievements is granted.

8 Comments on the financial report

8.1 Summary of Costs Incurred

Budget breakdown categories	Budget according to the grant agreement in €*	TOTAL Costs incurred (€)	% of Budget**
1. Personnel	€ 1,154,689.00	€ 1,295,162.97	112.17%
2. Travel and subsistence	€ 220,965.00	€ 52,346.93	23.69%
3. External assistance	€ 229,660.00	€ 265,201.08	115.48%
4. Durable goods			
Infrastructure	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	
Equipment	€ 20,150.00	€ 17,494.68	86.82%
Prototype	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	
5. Land purchase / long-term lease	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	
6. Consumables	€ 24,580.00	€ 18,476.53	75.17%
7. Other Costs	€ 103,400.00	€ 111,491.16	107.83%
8. Overheads	€ 74,245.00	€ 73,976.17	99.64%
TOTAL	€ 1,827,689.00	€ 1,834,149.52	100.35%

The implementation period was extended by 8 months, because the Covid-19 caused major disruption in the implementation. The extension allowed us to compensate the delays. **A significant part of the travel cost and some external assistance cost was reallocated to cover the personnel costs during the extended period.** Typically, the travel budget could be reduced significantly, as many events were cancelled or moved online during the pandemic.

There was no major budget change during the project period which would have required any amendment requests. We adjusted the budget with some minor changes, which have been communicated to the project monitor and through previous reports. The most important reallocations were the following:

1. BLI: Due to the pandemic HOS in general has underspent and thus made an amendment to its partnership agreement and reduced its budget with 30000 euros. This amount was transferred to BLI and was used to finance the project's closing workshop in Albania in October 2022.
2. BLECA: The B6 "technical support for enforcement and monitoring" external assistance budget for covert surveillance work (€27000) was used for covering the project manager's personal cost during the extended period (along with saving on the travel category). The covert surveillance work was funded from another source by BirdLife Cyprus.

3. BLECA: The A2 external assistance cost of creating an operational database (€40000) covered the cost of the preparatory mapping exercise (€12204) and the recommendation report (€14529). The remaining amount was used for disseminating the results, and to cover BLECA's project personnel costs in the extended period.
4. BLECA: The E5 Other cost for Audit (€12000) – after it became clear that we are not obliged to have an audit for the project -was used to contribute partly to the costs of the closing conference in October 2022 in Albania.
5. HOS: The deliverable of the summer kiosks under the action B8, eventually required more funds than initially forecasted due to necessary refurbishments to one of the two kiosks that had suffered unexpected damages while stored away. Additional funds were spent on transferring the kiosks from the project-sites and in between islands.
6. HOS: The deliverables of the short informative video and the TV spot against bird trapping, both under the same action (B8), were eventually less costly than expected. In the case of the video, the research for and the editing of the feature was undertaken by the news agency team of journalists *pro-bono* hence, they kept the rights of broadcasting and HOS did not charge it under the project at all. Furthermore, the TV spot was created in-house by HOS's engagement officer with strong support and original ideas by HOS's communication assistant.
7. C2 socio-economic action was underbudget, therefore assoc. beneficiaries used savings from travel costs (typically from events that had to be moved to online due to Covid) on to fill in these holes.
8. BL Cyprus: used part of the travel saving to add extra budget for external assistance cost to produce the 'bird guide' under B8.
9. HOS reallocated in total cc. 41500 euros for the external assistance cost category to be used for analysis of the ARU data (including the extra 2022 season) (16.500€), graphic design and illustration services for the communication material (ca. 5.300€), summer kiosk construction (€3452) workshop rental and catering services (2.145€), legal advisor to compile complain to the EC (5.000€), socio-economic expert to conduct analysis (6.000€) TV spot and documentary, translations.

The project spent out 100.35% of its budget.

8.2 Accounting system

- *Accounting system(s) employed and the code(s) identifying the project costs in the analytical accounting system*

In BLECA's accounting system each project (source of funding) is identified with a unique code and we have already established one for the LIFE ABC project. As you know, this project is co-financed by another project (the donor is the MAVA foundation.), identified with a different code. To capture the fact that this project is ALSO co-funding to LIFE ABC, we would need an additional field in our accounting system. However, adding more fields in this accounting system

would be too complicated, so the easy solution for clearly identifying project costs would be the following:

We use the LIFE project code as primary code for the costs that are financed from the EC contribution.

We use a different project code as primary code for the costs in the MAVVA project that are co-funding LIFE ABC but mark them with LIFE project code (2797) in the description field within the analytics. When the incurred costs are extracted from the accounting system and exported to an excel file, one can filter for the project code and identify all project cost related to LIFE ABC.

BLI also uses the project code 2797 for costs primarily paid from LIFE money. Starting from year 2020, BLI also identifies a code for co-funded LIFE expenses (900).

In BIOM's accounting system each project is identified with a unique code and for the LIFE ABC project this code is marked as profit centre LIFE ABC (number 8). On LIFE ABC project we have co-financing from Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Cooperation with NGOs, but we do not use separate codes for co-funded costs. When the incurred costs are extracted from the accounting system and exported to an excel file, one can filter for the project code and identify all project cost related to LIFE ABC.

Accounting codes for the LIFE ABC project:

BLECA	LIFIKB / 2797
BLI	2797 / 900 (co-funding)
BL Cyprus	48
LIPU	LIFE ABC
HOS	6762
BIOM	LIFE ABC

- *Procedure of approving costs*

As general rule in the project, every incoming invoice must include the project's short name and reference code, which is ensured that either the suppliers are informed about that in due time, or where it is not applicable a stamp is used. Every incoming invoice is released to booking and payment by the signature of the cost centre manager and/or the supervisor of the project budget. Competences to approve costs are governed by internal rules and therefore vary among beneficiaries depending on the work positions and the amount to be approved, but in general the project costs must be approved by project coordinators before the purchase.

- *Time recording system*

Each staff member is obliged to record his/her time spent when working in an online excel template. Standard time sheets are filled in by staff at a daily basis, recording time dedicated to work and to any breaks. Holidays, sickness, and business travel are recorded in the sheets too, at

daily basis. The time sheets must be signed and dated by the employee and approved by the line managers/head of the unit.

BLI issued attestation letters to LIFE staff to provide fix ratio and therefore they are exempted from keeping timesheets.

All beneficiaries switched to teleworking in March 2020, due to Covid-19. During this period, we have replaced the original signatures by electronic scanned signatures on the timesheets and counter-signed them upon return to the offices with the original signatures. Some partners (e.g. BLI and BLECA) allows flexible hybrid work arrangements (mixture of office presence and teleworking). BLECA switched using qualified electronic signature on timesheets from December 2021.

8.3 Partnership arrangements

The financial transactions between the coordinating beneficiary and the associated beneficiaries have taken place as suggested in the Grant Agreement and regulated by the individual Partnership Agreements.

<i>Partner</i>	<i>Amount #1 (EUR)</i>	<i>Date of transfer (1st instalment)</i>	<i>Amount #2 (EUR)</i>	<i>Date of transfer (2nd instalment)</i>
BirdLife Cyprus	€ 27,642.90	10/10/2018	€ 36,857.20	01/10/2020
HOS	€ 66,739.80	14/01/2019	€ 88,986.40	01/10/2020
LIPU	€ 50,796.60	11/01/2019	€ 67,728.80	01/10/2020
BIOM	€ 30,336.30	10/10/2018	€ 40,448.40	01/10/2020
BirdLife Int.	€ 11,970.00	11/01/2019	€ 15,960.00	01/10/2020

8.4 Certificate on the financial statement

None of the beneficiaries is required to submit a certificate on their financial statement at the Final Report stage since their maximum requested Union contribution planned in the budget is lower than the threshold stipulated in Article I.4.4 d) (750,000 EUR).

8.5 Estimation of person-days used per action

The personnel input went beyond the 100% mainly due to the extension of the project's end date. The biggest part of this cost was covered from unused travel expenses due to Covid-19 disruptions and from the external assistance cost of the covert surveillance work, which we could partly finance from another project. Besides the core actions and the obviously extended management work, the preparatory actions also required additional inputs even after the mid-term

of the project, as the monitoring action, the database studies, the re-organization of the NAP workshop and the planning for the extended communication all continued until the project's end.

Action type	Budgeted person-days	Person days spent	Estimated % of person-days spent
Action A: Preparatory actions	1340	1446	107.89%
Action B: Core actions	2420	2837	117.24%
Action C: Monitoring of the impact of the project action	262	169	64.50%
Action D: Public awareness/communication and dissemination of results	1128	1001	88.77%
Action E: Project management	1377	1600	116.23%
TOTAL	6527	7054	108.07%

Index of deliverables

1. *[Annex A1.1] A best practice guide for monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds (3rd edition – updated in 2022)*
2. *[Annex A2.1] Overview study of existing bird crime databases*
3. *[Annex A2.2] Recommendation report for an EU-level Bird Crime Database*
4. *[Annex A3.1] Format for National Action Plans for addressing IKB*
5. *[Annex A3.2] Local Action Plan for the Ionian Islands, Greece (HOS)*
6. *[Annex A3.3] Joint NGO letter to EC concerning non-compliance with NAP implementation of the Italian government*
7. *[Annex A3.4] NAP process in Croatia (BIOM)*
8. *[Annex A3.5] EC response letter to the joint Italian NGO letter*
9. *[Annex A4] International and national communication work plans 2021-22*
10. *[Annex B1.1] B1.1 Workshop reports of training workshops in priority countries and international workshops*
11. *[Annex B1.2] MoU for the Ministry to sign (HOS) and lobbying letters to the Ministry*
12. *[Annex B2.1] Magazine article on volunteer engagement & Description of the volunteer network (BIOM)*
13. *[Annex B2.2] Illegal pet market photos (HOS)*
14. *[Annex B2.3] Recall Operation Report 2020-21 (LIPU)*
15. *[Annex B3.1] Recommendations for improvements to the sanctioning framework in the priority countries*
16. *[Annex B3.2] ECD public consultation (submitted in May 2021) and joint NGO ECD position letter (prepared in autumn 2022)*
17. *[Annex B3.3] Consultation document gathering good practices to prevent IKB*
18. *[Annex B3.4] Developing and submitting a strategic complaint to the European Commission regarding the violation by the Greek State of Article 7(4) of the Birds Directive (HOS)*
19. *[Annex B5.1] Progress reports of Demonstration Projects with user-stakeholder groups - Croatia*
20. *[Annex B5.2] Progress reports of Demonstration Projects with user-stakeholder groups - Cyprus*
21. *[Annex B5.3] Progress reports of Demonstration Projects with user-stakeholder groups - Italy*
22. *[Annex B5.4] Progress reports of Demonstration Projects with user-stakeholder groups – Greece*
23. *[Annex B5.5] Educational brochure for police officers (BIOM)*
24. *[Annex B5.6] Birdwatching guidebook (BL Cy)*
25. *[Annex B6] Protocol for dismantling poaching hides in Croatia*
26. *[Annex B8.1] List of national events in priority countries*

27. *[Annex B8.2] Campaign report 2020*
28. *[Annex B8.3] Campaign report 2021*
29. *[Annex B8.4] Artistic mural work in Cyprus*
30. *[Annex B8.5] Video & TV spot against bird trapping*
31. *[Annex B8.6] Summer kiosks in the Ionian Islands (2 sites)*
32. *[Annex C2.1] Socio-economic impact report- Cyprus*
33. *[Annex C2.2] Socio-economic impact report- Croatia*
34. *[Annex C2.3] Socio-economic impact report- Italy*
35. *[Annex C2.4] Socio-economic impact report- Greece*
36. *[Annex D.2] Photos of the project signboards*
37. *[Annex D3.1] Knowledge sharing workshops and webinars*
38. *[Annex D3.2] LABC closing event report with photos*
39. *[Annex D4.1] Media Report: Press releases and articles - broadcasts in external media*
40. *[Annex D4.2] Press releases 2022 – Andkronos agency (Lipu)*
41. *[Annex D4.3] Ali magazine article (Lipu)*
42. *[Annex D5.1] Laymen's Report (English version)*
43. *[Annex D5.2] Laymen's Report (Croatian version)*
44. *[Annex D5.3] Laymen's Report (Italian version)*
45. *[Annex D5.4] Laymen's Report (Greek version)*
46. *[Annex E3] Amendment No.1 to HOS-BLECA Partnership Contract*
47. *[Annex E4] After-LIFE communication plan*

Financial tables (xls format):

48. *Consolidated financial table*
49. *Financial reporting table – BirdLife Cyprus*
50. *Financial reporting table – BirdLife Europe and Central Asia*
51. *Financial reporting table – BirdLife International*
52. *Financial reporting table - BIOM*
53. *Financial reporting table - HOS*
54. *Financial reporting table – LIPU*

Requested additional documents in previous CINEA letters:

- 55. BL Cyprus LABC Personnel Functions.xls*
- 56. HOS personnel justification for Senior Project Supervisor (George Sgouros)*
- 57. BLECA Financial - LillaBarabas2021costs*
- 58. HOS Financial - GeorgiaAlexopolou2021costs*

Signed/e-signed statements (pdf format):

- 59. Payment Request*
- 60. Cost summary*
- 61. Income summary*
- 62. Consolidated financial statement*
- 63. Funds distribution*
- 64. Individual financial statement – BirdLife Cyprus*
- 65. Individual financial statement - BirdLife Europe and Central Asia*
- 66. Individual financial statement - BirdLife International*
- 67. Individual financial statement - BIOM*
- 68. Individual financial statement - HOS*
- 69. Individual financial statement - LIPU*