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

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1. Who – or what – is EIFAC?
2. The structure of EIFAC, membership
3. How EIFAC works
4. The role of EIFAC in reconciling fisheries with conservation: some examples

1. Who is EIFAC?

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



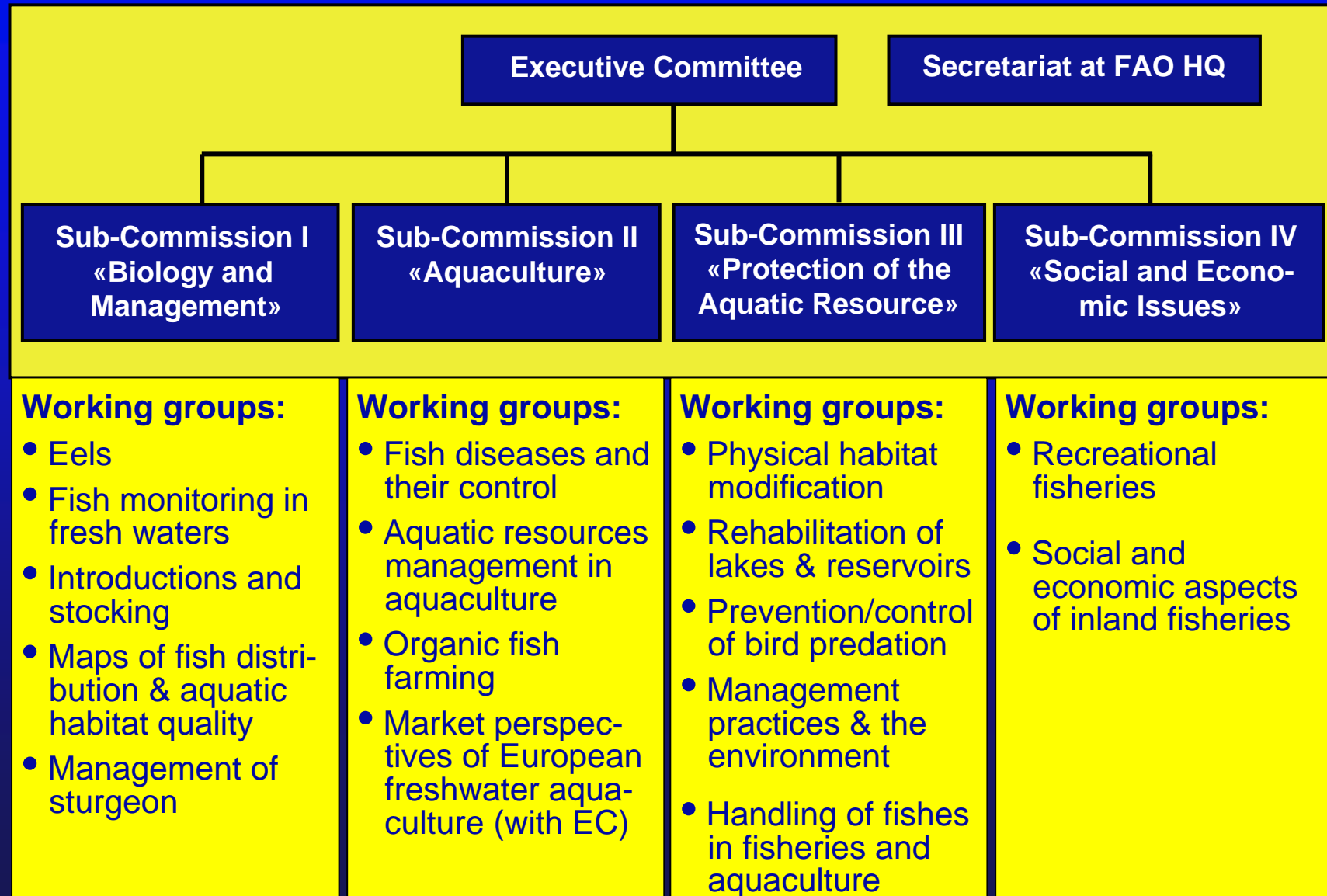
It is a **regional fisheries commission** of FAO according to Article VI of the FAO Constitution, serving as the centre of a network, linking policy-makers, managers, scientists and others working on inland fisheries and aquaculture issues.

1. Who is EIFAC?

EIFAC = European **Inland Fisheries Advisory** Commission

- focus on inland waters (freshwater)
- purely advisory function towards member states
- no regulatory power!
- no budget for activities → on charge of members
- based largely on voluntary work

2. The structure of EIFAC



EIFAC membership



34 members (states with national correspondent), including the European Commission.
Regular cooperation with scientists from North America, Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia.

3. How EIFAC works

3 main areas of activity:

- 1. A Plenary Session** of the Commission is held every two years (→ **session report** available online).
In conjunction with session:
Scientific symposium. Symposium proceedings published as books or special issues of scientific journals.
- 2. Between sessions**, most work of the Commission is carried out by the **working groups** (in meetings, by correspondence).
Main products: Reports, Technical and Occasional Papers (available online), and scientific publications, all made available to EIFAC members and others by FAO.
- 3. Networking:** contacts and exchange of information among scientists, managers, administrators.

4. The role of EIFAC in reconciling fisheries with conservation

Primary field of activity of EIFAC:

European inland fisheries and aquaculture: resource use

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

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

- Often poor state of aquatic habitats due to rapid and/or uncontrolled industrial development
- Certain fish populations also threatened by overexploitation
- Freshwater aquaculture is rapidly developing → need for environmentally sound and sustainable development

4. The role of EIFAC in reconciling fisheries with conservation: some examples

Example 1: Eel



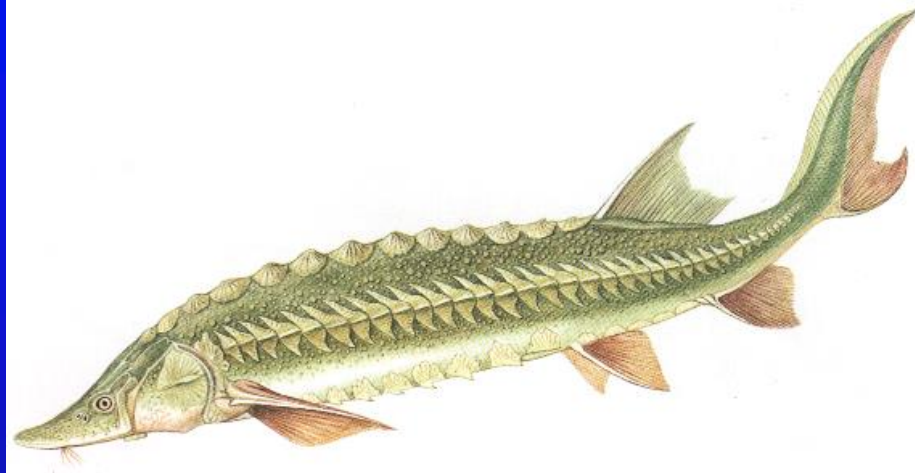
Catches (stocks) of the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) have dropped to an alarmingly low state in recent years.

—> Appropriate measures are pressing.

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

- safeguard the species in the long term (conservation),
- promote the sustainable fisheries of this highly valued resource.

Example 2: Sturgeon



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

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

Example 3: Bird predation



Cormorant



Common merganser

EIFAC working party on Prevention and control of bird predation:

Cooperation with European ornithological and fisheries organisations.

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

- > conflict between birds and fish of different conservation status;
- > European cormorant management plan?
- > strong need for reconciling fisheries interests with conservation.

Example 4: Rehabilitation of rivers for fish



River Thur,
Switzerland

Photograph by
Armin Peter

EIFAC working party on Effects of Physical Modification of the Aquatic Habitat on Fish Populations:

Produced a manual on river rehabilitation for fish (practical advice)

- > example for the commitment and involvement of EIFAC to restore and enhance the ecological basis of fish production;
- > example for reconciling fisheries with conservation.

