

The List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern: Implementation and Species updates

Policy Briefing
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Context

On 22nd October 2014 the European Parliament and the Council adopted the EU Regulation N. 1143/2014 (hereinafter referred to as the “IAS Regulation”).

As foreseen by Article 4 of the Regulation, on 13 July 2016 the European Commission adopted by means of an implementing act a list of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern (hereinafter referred to as the “Union List”). At EU level, there are now 66 IAS of Union concern, 30 animal species and 36 plant species, to which EU measures apply. The animal species consist of 4 fish species, 2 insect and rhabditophora species, 2 amphibian and reptile species, 6 crustacean species, 5 bird species and 11 mammal species.

According to the EU Regulation, “*alien species*” means “*any live specimens of a species, plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, that have been introduced outside its natural range*”. Invasive Alien Species (IAS) means an “*alien species whose introduction or spread has been found to threaten or adversely impact upon biodiversity and related ecosystem services*”.

Many of these species are brought into Europe intentionally, to be kept as pets or used as products of the fur or food industry. These animals can escape and some are deliberately released into the wild. There are also many species that are brought to Europe unintentionally, for example in the ballast tanks or cargo holds of seagoing vessels. The main routes and mechanisms of the introduction and spread of IAS are referred to as priority pathways. In this non-native environment, species may lack predators or be spared the limiting factors like food scarcity or competition with other species that normally keep them in check. As they may spread rapidly, they can cause significant damage to, any one or a combination of, biodiversity; the health of humans, animals or both; and the economy; becoming IAS. Roughly 10-15 % of alien species arriving in Europe eventually become invasive. Invasive alien species are one of the major causes of biodiversity loss.

The IAS Regulation introduces an EU-wide system to tackle this issue, with the Union List at

its core. This is the list of priority species which require EU action to prevent, minimise or mitigate their adverse impacts. Member States (MS) need to carry out the following measures with regard to species on the list: (1) prevention, (2) early detection and rapid eradication of new invasions, and (3) management of invasions that are already widely spread. In other words, listed species can no longer be intentionally imported, kept, transported, reproduced or released. If a new species is detected, it must be eradicated, while for the species that are already widely spread and settled, management measures must be put in place.

What has happened since the implementation of the EU Regulation?

- The list is not static and the IAS Regulation foresees that it should be updated. This is an ongoing process and information on species under consideration for future updates can be found on the [EC dedicated webpage on IAS](#).
- The [first update](#) of the Union list entered into force on 2 August 2017. The [second update](#) of the Union list entered into force on 15 August 2019. The full updated list as of this briefing is available [here](#).
- In 2018, as called for by Eurogroup for animals and other NGOs, the European Commission applied the Commission Delegated regulation (EU) 2018/968, which detailed the scientific requirements of risk assessment to add new species to the Union List.
- In October 2021 a [report](#) was published by the European Commission on the Implementation of the IAS Regulations. The report found that for several of the species on the Union List at the time, nearly all MS had undertaken measures with varying degrees of success. It states that improvements must be made regarding funding and administrative capacity to be effective. Additionally implementation in priority pathways has not been implemented in many MS, with further improvements needed in the coverage of surveillance systems and official control structures. Moreover, cost/benefit analysis must be conducted as well as research on management methods, focusing on humane management.
- The [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) includes the commitment to ensure the full implementation of the IAS Regulation with all other relevant legislation stating “The implementation of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation and other relevant legislation and international agreements must also be stepped up. [...]. The aim will be to manage established invasive alien species and decrease the

number of Red List species they threaten by 50%”.

- In May 2022 The Commission proposed 30 species, but the required majority was found for a modified proposal with 22 new IAS to be added to the list. The implementing regulation adding species to the Union list should enter into force towards the end of July or in August.
- As regards the process for removal of species from the Union list. The analysis conducted by the Commission with the help of an external consultant that provides the necessary scientific support. The review will be published in the summer or early autumn 2022.

How are Species added to the union List?

According to the IAS regulation, there are two types of review:

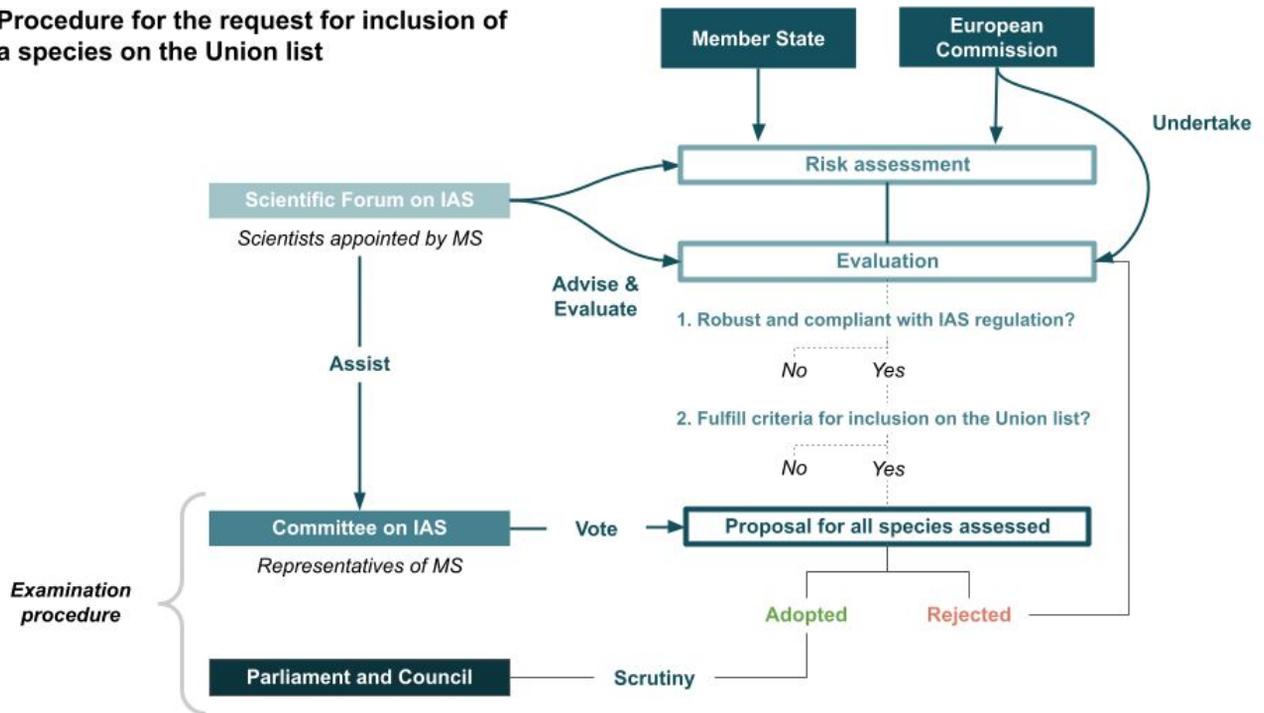
	Review of the Union list	Review of the IAS Regulation implementation
Provision	Art. 4(2)	Art. 24(3)
Timeline	Every 6 years	Every 6 years
Next review	Summer 2022	2027

It is possible to submit suggestions of new animal species to be included on the Union list at any time through the e-mail address ENV-IAS@ec.europa.eu. The updating of the Union list is a dynamic, ongoing process. This lengthy process usually lasts about one and a half years from the moment a risk assessment is prepared until the species is finally included on the Union list (if it is). The next update is likely to take place in 2024.

The procedure for the inclusion of a species on the Union list is described in the Figure below. In a first step, risk assessments for proposed species should be prepared compliant with Article 5(1) of the Regulation and submitted to the European Commission. The scientific robustness of the risk assessment is then evaluated by the Scientific Forum on IAS, composed by scientists appointed by the Member States. If the risk assessment is found to be compliant with the regulation and scientifically robust, the next step of the evaluation exercise considers whether the species meets all criteria for inclusion on the Union list as set out under Article 4(3) of the regulation, with due consideration of the elements set out in Article 4(6) thereof. For the purpose of this

process, the Commission is assisted by the Committee on IAS, composed by representatives of the Member States. Given the implications on international trade, any draft proposal to include the species on the Union list would first have to be notified to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The final proposal of the Commission following this procedure would be subject to the opinion of the Committee on IAS.

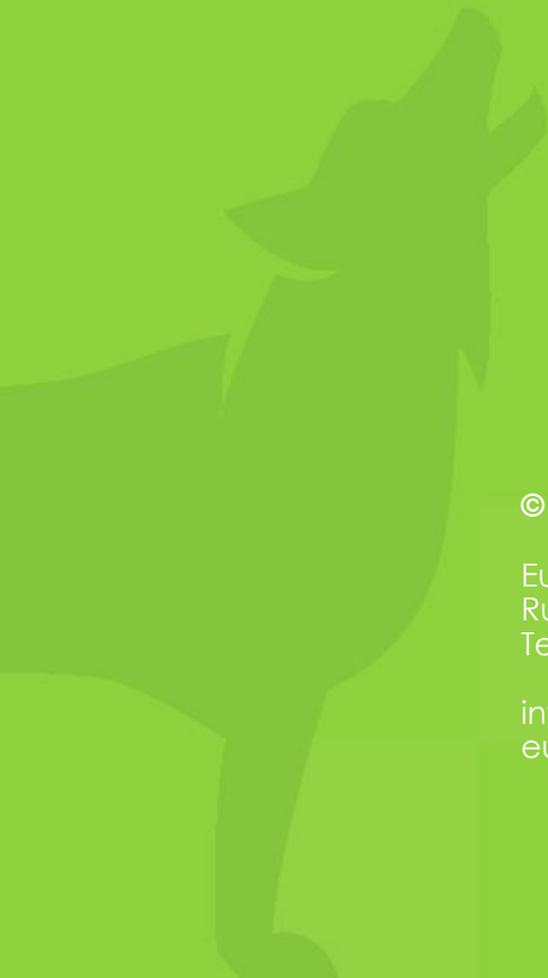
Procedure for the request for inclusion of a species on the Union list



It should be noted that this process has been criticized by several Member States due to a lack of transparency of the evaluation process. This list is an important ecological tool for efforts to preserve biodiversity, by limiting and intending to prevent the damage to ecosystems that can be caused by IAS. However, there are **serious questions raised** by the IAS Regulation and the Union List. For a discussion of the issues surrounding the Union List, the consequences for animal species that are included on the list and a list of recommendations, please read our [position paper here](#).

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