

INTRODUCTION : THE EU-NETWORK CRAYNET- IMPACTS ON FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS



The European network CRAYNET "European crayfish as keystone species-linking science, management and economics with sustainable environmental quality" emphasises knowledge-based management strategies. The CRAYNET meetings concentrate on certain topics: monitoring in conservation and management of natives; interaction between natives and aliens; control of aliens; habitat restoration; reintroduction and restocking; legislation; education. The Irish meeting (Kilkenny, 2003) "The endangered native crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*: bioindicator and heritage species" initiated debates about (1) what is a bioindicator, a flagship species or a heritage species?; (2) the problem of species complexes and the need to clarify and resolve taxonomy before management; and (3) what is meant by biodiversity in the context of European crayfish? The Norwegian meeting (Halden, 2003) "European native, crayfish with a special focus on *Astacus astacus*: linking socioeconomics and conservation" involved roundtables about (1) threats to indigenous population of crayfish at a landscape level; (2) exploitation, conservation, legislation; (3) reintroduction of indigenous crayfish, habitat restoration and monitoring; and (4) the urgent need for joint research about pathology. The present meeting (Innsbruck, 2004) "European native crayfish in relation to land-use and habitat deterioration with a special focus on *Austropotamobius torrentium*" aims to identify the species protection programs, to examine if legislation is working well in protecting vulnerable species, the state of advances about conservation genetics and how to make progress in education of the public. A permanent connection between the 12 core members provides opportunities to check the needed lines of research, to prepare recommendations, and to gather information for an atlas on the distribution of crayfish species in Europe as well as to prepare leaflets for the public.

Auteurs du document : C. SOUTY-GROSSET

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