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**BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE  
FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY**

**BU-DBP**

**Group of specialists - European Diploma**

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**Muddus National Park  
(Sweden)**

Category A .

RENEWAL

*Expert appraisal  
by Joan MAYOL  
(Majorca - Spain)*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The European Diploma was awarded to the Muddus National Park by Resolution (67) 23 in category A; it was renewed by Resolution (92) 14 on 18 May 1992 during the 476th meeting of the Committee of Ministers. In accordance with the Diploma rules, the situation of the park is to be examined with a view to a possible further renewal in 1997. The last visit was made in August 1991, by myself (doc. PE-S-ZP (92) 38).

The Environment Conservation and Management Division of the Council of Europe asked me to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal, which I did on 5 and 6 August 1996, holding meetings at the Department of the Environment in Lulea (seat of the regional authority responsible for park management) and at the Mountain Unit in Jokkmokk. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr Per Walsten (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency) and Dr Ronny Edin (Regional Agency). I would like to express my deep gratitude for the help and information provided by them as well as other individuals contacted on the following days, whose names are listed in Appendix 2.

The visit was made partly by helicopter and partly on foot, entering the park from the west, from Porjus to Muddusfallet and following a path to Luobbalape, lying nearly in the centre of the park. After stopping off in the Luobbalape refuge, we were picked up by the helicopter which flew us northwards over the park; we were set down on the road from Porjus to Gällivare. From personal contacts and my own tour of the park, I consider that the information obtained is quite sufficient to draft the report requested by the Council of Europe.

## II. THE MUDDUS PARK

### 1. Brief description

The Muddus National Park was created in 1942 and covers an area of 49,000 hectares, divided between the localities of Gällivare and Jokkmokk. It comprises both marshland and woodland: the latter predominates in the south, while the marshland and peatbogs are located in the centre and the north. The lakes and peatbogs, more substantial in the centre, are in fact a strict reserve to which access is prohibited from 15 March to 31 July; the same applies to other zones which are particularly fragile owing to the fact that peregrine falcons nest in them.

The park is slightly hilly, ranging from 166 m in the south to the highest point, 611 m, in the west. Most of the park, notably the lakes and peatbogs, is at about 400 m.

The forestland consists mainly of pines in the south and spruce firs in the north, but they are mixed with other species (birch, willow etc). The marshes and peatbogs are home to species which are characteristic of this biotope in Scandinavia: *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Linnea borealis*, *Marianthemum bifolium*, *Melampyrum silvaticum*, *Solilago virgaurea*, *Carex rostrata*, *Equisetum fluviatile* etc.

As for the fauna, there are various large mammals, such as the brown bear and the lynx. In addition, there are elk, martens, otters and also beavers, which have recolonised the park recently following their reintroduction in the region. Muddus is one of the areas used by the Saamis to graze reindeer but they are not very numerous and even few and far between in autumn. There are 115 bird species, including cranes, swans, divers, owls and

hawk-owls. Ten species of duck can be seen. Day predators include the osprey and montagu's harrier. The capercaillie population is four or five times denser in the park, where it is protected, than outside, where hunting is permitted. We were able to observe a female and a young fledgling.

The park's greatest asset is its almost untouched landscapes; parts of the forest seem never to have been exploited at all, while the remainder has been barely touched, all be that a long time ago. Farming activities have also been very limited; as a result the landscape is very natural. The highly discreet presence of a few Saamis (Laplanders) who watch over the grazing reindeer has virtually no impact.

## **2. Reindeer grazing**

As the Committee of experts had expressed an interest in the matter, I looked into the issue.

Reindeer grazing is a way of life for the Laplanders or Saamis. It is the Gällivare community which uses the Muddus for this activity, although the Sörkaitum community also uses it when passing through. It must be pointed out that Swedish law guarantees the Saamis' hunting and fishing rights in the areas where they have always had them (even in the parks), together with the right to cut trees to feed livestock in cases of absolute necessity. Such a situation arose in 1993, when a few trees were cut down during an abnormally lengthy frost. The park's report was closed and no sanctions imposed. It would nevertheless be useful to draw up statistics on hunting, fishing and tree-cutting as these do not exist at present (at least for hunting and fishing).

The cutting of trees is perhaps the sole source of potential conflict, since the Muddus could not support a strong livestock presence; it is more of a transit area for reindeer herds. The numerous marshes prevent intensive grazing.

The regional authorities have developed a computerised programme for monitoring grazing land (using a GIS); the available data are highly comprehensive. The Saamis take part in this programme, by providing the basic information. The system must greatly facilitate decision-making in this area, notably where the precautions to be taken in parks in the wake of grazing activity are concerned.

In any case, the comments made in the report on the Sarek and Padjelanta parks (far more important in this respect) as regards relations between the Saamis and the national parks seem just as applicable here (see the above mentioned report for further details).

## **3. Management**

The management of the park is confined to very small-scale surveillance, by two 2-man teams who also look after other national parks. This represents 30 man/days a year. They also maintain the visitor facilities: five (excellent) refuges, six picnic areas, a bird observation tower and several kilometres of wooden-plank bridges across the peatbogs. It should be noted that the central refuge has had to completely rebuilt following an accidental fire in 1993. Owing to its location, materials had to be flown in by helicopter.

There is no active biological management, which would not be appropriate in such a natural area.

#### 4. Changes since the last Diploma renewal

The park management plan has been approved. Although management falls within the remit of the Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens Län (regional authority), responsibility for its framing, drafting and approval lies with the National Agency, which thus maintains an active role as regards both technical and financial aspects. This seems a balanced arrangement which brings decision-making closer to the conservation interface and so guarantees the quality of the site. This distribution of responsibilities is a new feature since the last visit in 1991, when the central authority still bore sole responsibility.

The annual reports indicate a slight improvement in fauna since, at least, bears have been breeding since 1994 and beavers are also regularly seen in the park.

Substantial research projects have been carried out in the park: they include work on epiphytic lichens (very important for reindeer), the peregrine falcon, vascular plants, the otter and birds in general; lynx and wolverine are tracked by radio-monitoring, and a geological map has just been published.

The zone will be proposed as a reserve for the European Union's Natura 2000 project, although the phytosociological criteria used by Brussels (not particularly applicable to arctic vegetation) are not ideal for the region. It is odd that one of Europe's finest natural sites requires a change in the application of criteria to be accepted within a conservation system.

With other parks in the region (including Sarek and Padjelanta), Muddus will also be proposed for the UNESCO World Heritage listing.

#### 5. The 1992 recommendations

The Council of Europe made renewal of the Diploma in 1992 subject to three recommendations. My conclusions and comments are as follows.

##### 5.1 The Muddus management plan should be approved

As I have already mentioned, the plan has been approved and published by the Swedish Agency. The first recommendation has therefore been acted upon and the Swedish authorities deserve our congratulations.

##### 5.2 The number of wardens should be increased ... if possible, especially if the number of visitors rises

This recommendation has not met with the same success. The professionalism of the "rangers" we met was excellent. It is not the quality but the time devoted to on-site surveillance that, in my opinion, requires improvement.

It must be said that levels of visitors are rather erratic and, some years, there have been considerable declines compared with the figures of the previous year (see park reports). Nevertheless, the trend is slightly upward: during our visit, we encountered 18 visitors, compared with just 4 in 1991. The recommendation that the number of wardens be increased, at least in summer and possibly during the hunting season, should therefore be maintained.

5.3 Efforts to protect the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) should continue

The falcon population is well protected and co-operation between the national park and the Ornithological Society continues. The recommendation has been followed to the letter with a fair degree of success; two pairs are living in the park at present and are stable. They have bred very successfully without any human intervention.

**6. Conclusion**

My first and main conclusion is to recommend the renewal of the Diploma awarded to the Muddus National Park (Sweden) in category A, in view of the park's magnificent state of conservation and the guarantees for the future of this exceptional site provided by Swedish legislation and by the enthusiasm of the staff.

**7. Recommendations**

In view of the changes made in recent years, the following recommendations are proposed.

7.1 If possible, the number of wardens should be increased, especially in summer, when the number of visitors rises, and in the hunting season, particularly at the park boundaries.

This is the only recommendation to be maintained, although in more specific terms than before.

7.2 It should be ensured that budget levels do not limit the quality of conservation of the Muddus park, despite the general policy of cutbacks pursued in Sweden at present.

Clearly, a site of the calibre of Muddus must not be made vulnerable by budget restrictions. Although the management believe that efficiency can be improved, a budget cutback would be very dangerous. It is recommended therefore that this danger be avoided.

7.3 The lack of any distinct alterations to the Muddus park's natural characteristics must be perpetuated. In this respect, the decision in the management plan not to open access or a path in the north sector is to be encouraged.

The northern half of the park has no paths or points of access. In my opinion, this situation must not change.

7.4 Efforts to monitor the most important fauna species (peregrine falcon, bear, wolverine, otter, beaver, lynx, wolf etc) must be pursued, as these species are indicators of an exceptional environmental quality. Similarly, certain excesses (number of helicopter landings, human presence) potentially affecting the environment must be curbed.

The present situation is acceptable but precautions must be taken to avoid abuses in future.

7.5 A commitment from the Saamis to active protection of the park should be envisaged. Existing Saami organisations should be invited to take an active role in conserving this heritage, which is Saami, Swedish and European at the same time.

## APPENDIX I

## DOCUMENTATION

Council of Europe's documents

SN-ZP (92) 38	Expert appraisal - Muddus National Park
Resolution (92)14	of the Committee of Ministers
SN-ZP (93) 6	Annual Report of Muddus - 1992
PE-S-ZP (94) 6	Annual Report of Muddus - 1993
PE-S-ZP (95) 6	Annual Report of Muddus - 1994
PE-S-ZP (96) 6	Annual Report of Muddus - 1995
PE-S-ZP (96) 61	Points discussed and decisions taken

...1996 Berggrund, Jordarter och Geomorfologi, Muddus National Park Sveriges Geologiska, Undersökning, SGU Rap. 4467

BERNES, C., (Ed) 1994.- *Biological diversity in Sweden, A country study*, Monitor 14. Swedish environmental Protection Agency

CAJ NOREN, 1996.- *The fact about Norrbotten Länsstyrelsen I Norrbotten Län.*

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LÖFGREN, R., 1989.- *Nationalparksplan för Sverige Naturvårdsverket*, 126 pgs.

NATURVÅRDSVERKET, 1989.- *Muddus, a national Park in Norrbotten County*, Dépliant, 5pgs, Carte

PETTERSSON, T., (Ed) 1995.- *Miljö 2000 Lansstyrelsen I Norrbottens Län. Rap. Serie nummer 9*

SYDOW, U., 1995.- *Fjällblommor I fickformat, Länsstyrelsen I Norrbotten Län*, 64 pgs.

TERSTAD, J., (Ed) 1996.- *Action plan on biological diversity*. Swedish environmental Protection Agency. Rap. num 4567

APPENDIX II

PEOPLE CONTACTED

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Naturskyddsforeningen i Jokkmokk  
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KARINA LÖVGREN  
Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens Län  
(Responsable du suivi par G.I.S. de pâturage de rennes)

BJÖRN GNNERFET  
Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens Län  
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APPENDIX III

RESOLUTION (92) 14

**on the renewal of the European Diploma  
awarded to the Muddus National Park**

**(Sweden)**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute for the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Muddus National Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Muddus National Park in Category A until 27 October 1997;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations:

1. the Muddus management plan should be approved as soon as possible, the main priorities being the protection of the park and a guarantee that in the period ahead, when the management of the park becomes the responsibility of the region, its preservation will continue to be the objective pursued;
2. the number of wardens should be, if possible, increased in view of the diverse tasks they are called upon to perform;
3. the efforts to protect the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) should continue.



**APPENDIX IV**

**DRAFT RESOLUTION (97)..**

**on the renewal of the European Diploma  
awarded to the Muddus National Park**

**(Sweden)**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Muddus National Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Bureau of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (BU-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Muddus National Park in category A until ..... 2002;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations:

1. that the number of wardens be increased, especially in summer, when the number of visitors rises, and in the hunting season, principally at the edges of the park;
2. that adequate budget resources be granted in order to maintain proper management of the park;
3. that the necessary measures be taken to ensure that the park's landscapes conserve all their natural characteristics;
4. that research work be continued, particularly as regards the monitoring of fauna populations; in this connection, it would be highly desirable to examine the impact of certain human activities on those populations;
5. that the possibility of actively involving the Saamis (Laplanders) in the management of the park be considered; it would be desirable to build greater awareness among these communities of the park's value for their everyday lives.