

Strasbourg, 2nd November 2017
[pa12e_2017.doc]

T-PVS/PA (2017)12

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

37th meeting
Strasbourg, 5-8 December 2017

**REPORT OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE AD-HOC RESTRICTED
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON REPORTING ON THE EMERALD
NETWORK OF AREAS OF SPECIAL CONSERVATION INTEREST**

*Document prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation*

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1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked the Serbian Ministry for Environmental Protection for the kind invitation to host the 2nd meeting of the Ad-Hoc Restricted Group of Experts in Belgrade as well as the Secretariat for the preparation of the documents.

The representative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection welcomed the participants and informed of the Serbian preparatory work for the accession to EU and the setting up of Natura 2000.

The Chair presented the outcomes of the 1st meeting of the Ad-Hoc Restricted Group of Experts on Reporting on the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest organised in 2016 and emphasized the importance to agree on the reporting format and on the list of species and habitats which have been discussed at length in the last years.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix I.

3. Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention

3.a Outcomes regarding Eionet's meeting "Streamlining reporting between Nature Directives and Emerald under the Bern Convention"

Marc Roekaerts presented the results of the Eionet Workshop held in Copenhagen in June 2017. The main topic discussed was the streamlining of the reporting under Nature Directives/Natura 2000 and the Bern Convention/Emerald Network. He recalled the history of the Bern Convention and EU Directives and the adoption of main resolutions and recommendations. The EU has adopted its reporting format by taking into account the importance of cooperation between the EU and non-EU countries. Countries which are in the pre-accession process and have shifted their work to Natura 2000 should get back to the Emerald Network as both networks are fully compatible.

3.b Status of the reporting under the Nature Directives

Doug Evans presented the status of the reporting under the Nature Directives. The reporting requirements for EU member states focuses on the conservation status of habitats and non-birds species, their status and trends, the sites and the derogations. The report is organised by biographical regions.

He recalled the legal background under the Habitat Directives and that the reporting is foreseen every 6 years. 3 reports were produced so far.

The Bird Directive report is due every 3 years and it is more a bureaucratic exercise for implementing the Directive than a report on the biology of the species. A specific reporting format and tool was developed for the reporting on birds. The report focuses on the conservation status at national level and not only within the protected sites. It focuses on favorable reference value to ensure the conservation status of the species. The distribution maps for species and habitats follow the standard 10x10 km grid. Future prospects indicate the trends in the species parameters; good, poor, bad, unknown. Information on pressures, threats and conservation measures are also reported using agreed standard lists.

The Paris Topic Centre on Biological Diversity and the European Environment Agency assess the countries' reporting on Habitat Directives based on an agreed methodology. Where necessary national data are weighted by distribution area or population size. The Bird Directive reporting analysis is carried out by a European bird consortium

The UK representative presented his country endeavors in reporting under the Habitat Directives over two years process. Two persons are working full time on the reporting, which represents a significant employment of resources, and there is a need to dispose of an efficient scientific national monitoring network for collecting data.

3.c Legal analysis of the Emerald Network reporting requirements under the Bern Convention

The Secretariat presented the Legal analysis on Emerald Network reporting requirements under the Bern Convention ([T-PVS/Inf\(2017\)11](#))

The UK representative stated that this report was presented only for information.

The Chair pointed out that the title of the document is on Emerald Network reporting requirement. The reporting requirement on the conservation status of species and habitats should focus on species and habitats over the national territory. The Secretariat agreed on the misleading of the title and that the reporting should not only focus on Areas of Special Conservation Interest but on species and habitats at national level.

The representative of Norway stated that this analysis was important for countries for setting priorities and asking for resources.

The representative of Switzerland regretted the repeated references to the non-legally binding nature of the Emerald's' resolutions and recommendations which could weaken the importance of the reporting by the Parties to the Bern Convention.

3.d Proposal of reporting format

Marc Roekaerts presented the reporting format based on EU Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and EU Article 12 of the Bird Directive reporting format, as adopted for the 2013-2018 period ([T-PVS/PA\(2017\)9](#))

For the Bern Convention all reporting obligations are merged into one form, including birds.

The reporting format is organised in four main parts:

- General reporting format
- Resolution No. 6(1998) species (except birds)
- Resolution No. 4(1986) habitats
- Resolution No. 6(1998) birds

The reporting on species and habitats should be done at national and biogeographical level. Most of the selected species are present in 14 countries. Countries which are not setting up the Emerald Network should also report on the conservation status of species and habitats.

The Secretariat pointed out that the reporting procedure should start at the beginning of 2018 in order to collect the reports by the end of 2019 even though the reporting tool is not available. Considering that the form is already ready and that the first part of the guidelines is available, Parties are in capacity to plan the collection of data to be considered under the reporting.

The representative of Moldova stressed the importance to be in line with the reporting of EU Directives and that countries have different stages of capacity for reporting. Moldova does not have human capacity for reporting. There is a need to organise training seminars for national experts, sharing good practices examples from EU countries for a better understanding of the rules.

The representative of the Topic Center on Biological Diversity, Doug Evans, informed the participants that the French and German versions of the guidelines are in preparation for the EU Directives.

Likewise Moldova, the Ukrainian representative underlined the limited possibility for reporting because of lack of existing monitoring networks.

The representative of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” stressed the need for training at national and regional level for experts and people who work at local level in management bodies of protected areas.

The Georgian representative underlined the lack of human resources for reporting on scientific species and habitats. They do not dispose of enough data on species and habitats, neither of financial resources to carry out research. She also stressed the importance of organising training on the methodology to ensure quality reporting.

The Secretariat informed the participants that two workshops will be organised in 2018 within the framework of the ENI SEIS East II project funded by the EU and implemented by the European Environment Agency. Taking into account the need of training, the content of the workshops will be clarified with the partner organisations.

The UK representative suggested assessing what worked and did not work in the first reporting exercise and look at the harmonization between Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network.

Doug Evans pointed out that countries have other reporting obligations under their national duties and CBD; therefore the data source should be the same.

The representative of Switzerland supported the reporting format at the condition that it is an exercise / a trial to assess the work load and that it is not aimed to measure the effectiveness of the ecological network. Because the selected list of species and habitats is limited, the reporting cannot be representative of the conservation status of species and habitats.

The Secretariat underlined the need to understand the challenges faced by the countries in reporting and the state of unknown information on species and habitats.

Finally, the Ad-hoc Restricted Group of Experts, agreed on the reporting format.

3.e 10 x 10 km grid to be used for the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention

Marc Roekaerts informed the Ad-Hoc Restricted Group of Experts that the Contracting Parties will be guided towards using the 10x10 km grid through the organisation of a Workshop in 2018. Countries are most likely to collect distribution data in their own national grids and projections (e.g. 1x1 km grid which is not useful for an analysis at pan-European level) and to convert them into a common 10 x 10 km projection grid for the purposes of the reporting. Guidance will be provided on how to convert national grid data towards the Pan-European 10x10 km grid.

This solution will be cheaper than to create a new grid system.

3.f Guidelines and supporting documents adapted from Nature Directives reporting

The Secretariat presented the draft [Guidelines](#) for the reporting exercise under Resolution No. 8(2012). They follow step by step the structure of the reporting format.

The Secretariat praised the important work done by the European Commission, the EEA and the Topic Center on Biological Diversity. The Guidelines are consistent with the one elaborated by the EU. Therefore, it is not suitable to change this coherent format.

The development of the reference portal for the Guidelines is undergoing for the use of Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention.

The guidelines will not be submitted for adoption to the Standing Committee.

The Group of Experts is invited to send comments on the draft Guidelines to the Secretariat within the next three weeks; deadline Friday 20 October 2017.

3.g Reporting tool

Doug Evans presented the reporting tool developed for the reporting under the Nature Directives (Article 12 and 17). The reporting tool is needed to allow easy compilation of the reports. The tool enables data quality checks. There are separate tools for Article 12 (Birds Directive) and Article 17 (Habitat Directive). It allows for several “reporters” and one “coordinator”. There is a user manual and helpdesk.

The Topic Center on Biological Diversity is drawing the technical specifications for the development of the tool and it will probably be available early 2018. The final output will be in XML format.

The Secretariat pointed out that the reporting tool for the Bern Convention will be adapted from the EU tool. This will save financial resources ensuring coherence at pan-European level. The reporting tool adapted for the Bern Convention should be available at the end of 2018 in order to start the reporting exercise beginning 2019.

3.h Selected species and habitats to be considered for the first reporting cycle under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention

Marc Roekaerts presented the selection of species and habitats to be considered for the 1st reporting cycle under Resolution No. 8(2012) ([T-PVS/PA\(2017\)10](#))

He recalled the criteria of selection of 30-50 species and habitats:

- presence of species and habitats in as many countries as possible;
- selection should represent all species and habitat for different groups;
- priority to be given to Red Listed species;
- species/habitats with declared unfavorable conservation status in the EU;
- species/habitats well distributed over all biogeographical regions.

The selected species and habitats are present in 14 countries that have proposed / candidate / adopted Emerald Network sites. No marine species/habitats were selected to simplify the reporting process.

The representative of Ukraine stated that they do not have a monitoring system to collect data on the species and habitats and this will result in weak report.

Marc Roekaerts pointed out that, if the list of selected species/habitats is further reduced, the common species and habitats to all countries will also be drastically reduced. In the first EU reporting exercise almost 50 % of information was unknown. It is important to build the capacity of the Parties for the reporting methodology and to get a minimum meaningful data.

The Secretariat reassured the Ad-Hoc Restricted Group of Experts that some data on species and habitats can be found in the IUCN red listing, Emerald Standard Data Forms and conclusions of the Emerald biogeographical evaluation seminars. He proposed to reduce the number of species and habitats for some countries that have more features to report on as a result of the statistics. In order to reduce the reporting task, it will artificially reduce the number of species and habitats of the Russian Federation and Ukraine that have more than 40 features to report on.

The Group of Experts agreed with the Secretariat's proposal of subset of species and habitats and requested assistance through CoE experts and training workshops.

4. Next steps ahead to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention

4.a Timetable for the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) of the Bern Convention

The Secretariat proposed a timetable for the first reporting cycle under Resolution No. 8 (2012). 2018 will be devoted to the preparation of the reporting exercise and the finalization of the reporting tool, country codes, reference list, etc. The supporting documents will be available by middle 2018 from the Emerald Network Reference Portal.

Two training workshops on the reporting methodology for Eastern partnership countries will be organised in 2018 in cooperation with EEA. Representatives from additional Contracting Parties will be invited to attend these workshops.

The EU's reporting timetable was recalled:

1. Delivery Art 12: 31 July 2019.
2. Delivery art 17: 30 April 2019

The reporting under Resolution No. 8(2012) could therefore target a delivery by the end of December 2019.

5. Conclusions

The Ad-Hoc Restricted Group of Experts on Reporting on the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest agreed on:

- The reporting format on the conservation status of species and habitats, which was adapted from the one developed by the EU, to ensure systematic and pan-European approach between EU and non-EU countries.
- Revising/reviewing the reporting format in the light of the outcomes resulting from the first reporting exercise and the challenges faced by the Contracting Parties.
- Using the reporting format as an exercise/trial to assess the national capacity for gathering scientific data on species and habitats, and evaluate the availability of the required reporting

information.

- Organising training seminars for Parties on the methodology for reporting and sharing good practices from EU countries in order to strengthen national and local capacities.
- Developing guidelines to convert national distribution grid data towards the pan-European 10x10 km projection grid.
- Transmitting comments to the Secretariat on the draft Guidelines for reporting which were adapted from the one adopted by the EU: deadline 20 October 2017.
- Following the format of the reporting tool which is the same developed for the reporting under the Nature Directives.
- Reducing artificially the selection of species and habitats, to be considered for the 1st reporting cycle for the Russian Federation and Ukraine that have the highest features to report on.
- The deadline for submitting the report: December 2019.