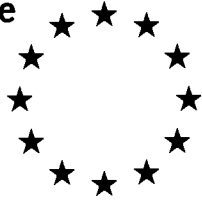


Council of Europe  
Conseil de l'Europe



Strasbourg, 20 January 1997  
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PE-S-DE (97) 50

**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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**Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks  
(Sweden)**

Category A

RENEWAL

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

The Secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit.

The resolution awarding the European Diploma is set out in Appendix III and the Secretariat has included a draft resolution for possible renewal in Appendix IV.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A Category A European Diploma was awarded to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks in 1967. It has been renewed on 5 occasions, the last time being 18 May 1992 under Resolution (92) 14, adopted at the 476th meeting of the Committee of Ministers. This year it was necessary to appraise the situation in the park to ascertain whether there should be a further renewal. My previous visit to the site was August 1991 (doc. PE-S-ZP (92) 38).

The Environment Conservation and Management Division of the Council of Europe entrusted me with the visit which was conducted between 7 and 9 August 1996 and included meetings at the Department of the Environment in Lulea (Headquarters of the regional authority responsible for the management of the park) and the Mountain Unit in Jokkmokk. I was assisted by Dr Per Walsten (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency), Dr Ronny Edin (Regional Office) and Ranger Erling Waara, who works in the area. I would like to thank them for their assistance and all the information they provided. Our thanks also go to all the other persons listed in Appendix II.

Part of the visit was carried out in a helicopter and this gave us a very good overall view of the parks. We flew over the entire area of the parks with stops in Arasluokta (where we slept); Staloluokta, the section on the Norwegian border (Njammeljaure), the isthmus between Lakes Vastenjaure and Virihaure; the central part of the park around Sarek-Pierikhaure, the summit of Tjakkeli by the Rapadalen, the middle reaches of this river, and even ranging outside the park, to the south-western valley where it is planned to extend the Sarek park.

I was able to talk to various hut wardens, Sami people (Lapps), members of nature conservation associations and various technical staff. I believe that the information collected during this visit is entirely adequate for the report requested by the European authorities.

By comparing the dates of my two visits (the beginning of August this year and the end of August five years ago) I was able to ascertain that the beginning of August is a good time for botanists (plants are in flower) and for entomologists (unfortunately, most of the 25 species of mosquitoes were still fully active!).

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARKS

Sarek and Padjelanta are described in the documents of the Council of Europe (SN-ZP (85) 44), but for those who have not read these reports, here is a brief description of each park. The two parks form a geographic whole, meaning that my comments on their natural features can be combined (it should be pointed out that they have been awarded only one Council of Europe Diploma between them).

### 1. Sarek

Sarek is one of the most unspoilt national parks in Europe. It consists of 1,970 km<sup>2</sup> of mountains, glaciers and deep valleys which go to make up one of the most remarkable mountain reserves of the European continent. There are 200 summits of over 1,800 m, six of over 2,000 m and nearly one hundred glaciers. 9% of the park is made up of birch forest, 7% of glaciers, 2% of rivers and lakes and 1% of peat bogs; the remaining 80% consists of about twenty different types of alpine vegetation. The landscape therefore is quite awe-inspiring and remarkably rich. The park was set up in 1909. The land belongs to the state.

To the east, the north and the west, it is bordered by other national parks (Stora Sjöfallets and Padjelanta). These provide the best possible buffer-zones.

## **2. Padjelanta**

Between Sarek and the Norwegian border is the 1,984 km<sup>2</sup> area of Padjelanta, a much more recent park set up in 1962. It consists of a vast plateau at an altitude of 800-900 m, with very large lakes (Vastenjaure and Virihaure, which is regarded as the most beautiful lake in Sweden) and large mountains, though they are not as high as those of Sarek (the highest peak is Jeknafo at 1,837 m). Alpine vegetation is also prevalent (more than 82%) along with water features (15%). The remaining area is divided up between birch forests, glaciers and peat bogs. The park contains one of the largest glaciers in Sweden, Älmäijekna. The land belongs to the state.

There is slightly more human impact in Padjelanta. There is a 150 km walking trail crossing the park, including wooden planking (for about 10-12% of the length) and a number of bridges. Along the trail there are eight excellent mountain huts run by the Swedish national park authorities, enabling hikers to explore the park in safety. There are also three Sami camps within the boundaries which are used as bases to graze reindeers during the summer. This has only a minor impact on the land but is enough to create a different approach in the two parks as far as management is concerned.

## **3. Natural features**

The existence in Europe of a protected area of some 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> without any notable human influence (permanent housing, roads or electric cables) makes this site somewhat unique. The only existing activities (the grazing reindeer, the Sami camps in the summer, and a few hundred tourists walking the trail every year) have no appreciable impact on its conservation.

The most remarkable features of these parks are the glaciated landscape, including some very interesting geomorphological formations, quite a variety of flora, bearing in mind the harsh climate and the relatively short biological history since the last glaciation (over 400 higher plant species have been found in Padjelanta), and a large variety of fauna, including in particular some of the major European carnivores: brown bear, wolverine, lynx and wolf. While the latter species is rather exceptional (it has only been identified by means of tracks left in the winter and not every year), bears and wolverines are relatively common. We actually had the privilege of watching two bears during my visit and following two lynxes and two wolverines using radio-tracking. The bear population in the area has reached such a high level that it has been decided to issue hunting permits for 15 individuals including 5 females (outside the park, of course).

Other noteworthy species found in the park are the arctic fox and the elk. The largest elk in Sweden are found in the Rapadalen Valley, in Sarek, where we were actually able to observe some extraordinary specimens and nobody is allowed to hunt them (the Sami still have the right to hunt elk in Padjelanta). There is a long list of bird species in the park including white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, scandinavian buzzard, gyrfalcon, pink-footed goose, long-tailed and arctic skua, ptarmigan, snowy owl and great grey owl. The most specialised species of European birds living at high altitudes can be seen in these parks alongside many other less emblematic birds.

No exploitation of natural resources is authorised in the park, whether of animals (with the exception of hunting by the Sami people and a very limited amount of fishing for sport), plants (with the exception of reindeer grazing), or minerals.

#### **4. Management and supervision**

The Mountain Unit (Fjällenheten) is responsible for management in the field. This unit is currently controlled by the regional authorities, the Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens Län (the Norrbotten County Administrative Board).

The Mountain Unit consists of 19 staff, seven of whom work in offices and twelve of whom work as wardens in the field. The unit is in charge of a huge area (comprising all the parks and reserves in the north, amounting to some 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and a network of paths totalling about 2,000 km in length). Only four rangers are employed part-time to supervise the areas awarded the diploma by the Council. Admittedly, this is a very low number, but the absence of any problems (the population density in the region is 0.4 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>), the co-operation of the police and border guards, as well as the presence of seven hut wardens during the summer, make it possible to keep watch over the parks.

Park facilities, particularly the huts and paths, are in a very good condition and maintenance is entirely satisfactory. Swedish parks still have a deservedly high reputation among visitors.

#### **5. Scientific research**

Radio-tracking of brown bears (a project run by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency in conjunction with the WWF) has been extended to the other major predators (wolverine and lynx). A new system of compensation for reindeer farmers has been set up; the state pays an annual amount for each of the carnivore's breeding areas, corresponding to a statistical total number of reindeer caught whether they are detected or not. This sum is paid to the Sami community with grazing rights in the area where the family of predators lives. This has given rise to a highly comprehensive list of predators to which the Sami people have made an active contribution.

Some birds are also the subject of surveys in the parks.

### **III. THE SAMI PEOPLE**

During our visit special attention was paid to this matter, in the light of the third recommendation of the resolution on the renewal of the Diploma and the request of the group of experts.

The Sami people or Lapps live in the parks in the summer, particularly in Padjelanta. For these people this is a particularly important area for grazing reindeer. There are some 125 stock-breeders in the parks and a little less than 25,000 reindeer, meaning that there are 25 hectares per head (not including glaciers and lakes) and only during summer. This would seem to indicate that there is no danger of over-grazing in the parks, which is also the park rangers' view. The increase in the herds in the Norrbotten county as a whole following the Chernobyl disaster (owing to a decline in the reindeer market), has now levelled out at 150,000, compared to the maximum of 180,000 authorised by the law. The main threat to the parks is not over-grazing but is linked to the modernisation of techniques such as the use of

motorbikes for herding, the modernisation of summer homes, and the use of skidoos. There is also hostility towards the large predators which kill some 500 reindeer per year, although the compensation paid for this avoids problems (see above).

The area of the parks is used by three Sami communities: the Tourpon (south Padjelanta), the Jakkakaskas (south Sarek and central Padjelanta) and the Sirkas (north Sarek and north Padjelanta). We talked to a member of the Sirkas community who was very aware of conservation problems but could not understand the difference between the land inside the parks and the land outside. There will be problems in the future particularly as regards winter grazing in the south of the area.

Problems also exist in the forestry sector because old trees are becoming increasingly rare. Some years ago the state used to pay to have these trees cut down, now it is paying to protect them. The leaders of the local communities cannot understand these measures.

Likewise, they own some 18,000 head of reindeer and, for them, predators represent a restriction on their way of life.

The Sami people are very satisfied with their involvement in drawing up the list of predators. They have also taken part in discussions on setting up mountain safety facilities. Since the Sami form part of a relatively well-organised community (there are a number of organisations, in addition to the existing communities, even an international parliament - including Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Russian communities), the question of nature conservation should perhaps also be addressed to them. These parks, which are national for the Swedes, award-winners for the whole of Europe, and likely to be declared a world heritage site in the future, should perhaps be given a seal of approval by the Sami. One could argue, after all, that they are more important for them than for anybody else.

Another possible approach has been adopted at the Ajtte Museum in Jokkmokk, which is dedicated both to the Sami culture and to the national parks of northern Sweden. The Museum actually already contributes to field-work in Padjelanta. Activities to raise awareness about the park's assets aimed at the Sami people, particularly schoolchildren, are also another possibility worth considering.

With regard to reindeer grazing activities, it is now becoming clear that certain practices are having a somewhat adverse effect, particularly the use of cross-country motorbikes. It may be that we should be promoting traditional methods (such as dogs) or even more sophisticated, albeit expensive, means (such as helicopters).

#### IV. DIPLOMA RECOMMENDATIONS

When the Diploma was renewed in 1992, the committee made four recommendations (cf. Appendix I).

##### 1. Carrying out the plans for enlargement featured in the *Nationalparksplan för Sverige*

The plan was to enlarge Padjelanta national park by incorporating another 23,000 hectares to the south-west (the Sulitelma range). Sarek would also be considerably enlarged by the addition of Tjuoltadelen, the inner delta of the Rapadalen - which is especially important - and the inclusion of the western part of the national park of Stora-Sjöfallets. Although the latter may appear to be a purely administrative change since the area

is already a national park, it will make a difference because Sarek is run according to stricter rules and is the area which has been awarded a Council of Europe Diploma. The plan to enlarge the parks still exists and some progress has been made on implementing it, but there is no completion date yet because this partly depends on the acquisition of property rights and, by extension, on the budget.

2. Drafting formal management plans, permitting consultation with the Sami people and ensuring that decentralised management is not a step backwards

The plan for Padjelanta has been adopted and published. The plan for Sarek is still being drawn up and, in our opinion, decentralisation has not had any adverse effects. Therefore this requirement has largely been met.

3. Information campaigns for and about the Sami people, in co-operation with the Ajtte Museum (Jokkmokk)

The museum is still an excellent source of information both on the parks and on the people and some noticeable changes have been made (a Sami home is now open to tourists in Staloluokta), but there is scope for further improvement.

4. Continuing research on the major predators

As mentioned above, research is not only continuing but has been extended. This condition, therefore, has been entirely fulfilled.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

First and foremost, we recommend that the committee should renew the European Diploma, awarded to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks (Sweden), in Category A, bearing in mind their excellent state of conservation and the guarantees that the Swedish law and the commitment of the staff in charge offer for the future of these exceptional sites.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding recommendations, in the four years which have passed since the last renewal it has been possible to meet, at least partly, the second and fourth recommendations. We propose the following formula for the new recommendations:

1. The plans featured in the *Nationalparksplan för Sverige* concerning the enlargement of Padjelanta and Sarek make for better protection of both these parks, and it would be advisable for the Swedish authorities to carry them through to completion as quickly as possible and to keep the Council of Europe informed.

This is the same as the recommendation made five years ago which we believe it is worth reiterating.

2. Budget cuts should be avoided, in spite of the general policy of cutbacks currently being implemented in Sweden.

Any reduction of the budget could threaten the general state of conservation of the parks. Clearly, the first condition can only be fulfilled if the necessary funds are provided.

3. The management plan for Sarek is vital, bearing in mind the importance of this park. It should be drawn up in consultation with the Sami people and this may open the way to their involvement in the life of the park.

Considering that Padjelanta already has a plan, it is also necessary for Sarek to have one.

4. Arrangements should be made for the Sami people to make a commitment to active protection of the park. Existing Sami organisations should be asked to play an active part in the conservation of this heritage, which is equally that of the Sami, Sweden and Europe.

I feel that this recommendation reflects the interest expressed by the Group of Experts about the situation in the parks regarding the life of the Sami people and reindeer grazing.



APPENDIX I

DOCUMENTATION

Council of Europe's documents

SN-ZP (92) 39	Rapport d'expertise. Parcs nationaux de Sarek et Padjelanta
Résolution (92) 15	du Comité des Ministres
SN-ZP (93) 7	Annual report of Sarek and Padjelanta - 1992
PE-S-ZP (94) 7	Annual report of Sarek and Padjelanta - 1993
PE-S-ZP (95) 7	Annual report of Sarek and Padjelanta - 1994
PE-S-ZP (96) 7	Annual report of Sarek and Padjelanta - 1995
PE-S-ZP (96) 61	Points discutés et décisions prises

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

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**APPENDIX II**

**PEOPLE CONTACTED**

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**SONJA KNOLJOK**

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**KARINA LÖVGREN**

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**BJÖRN GNNERFET**

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**APMUT JVAR KNOLJOK**

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**APPENDIX III**

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

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RESOLUTION (92) 15

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA  
AWARDED TO THE SAREK AND PADJELANTA NATIONAL PARKS  
(Sweden)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 May 1992  
at the 476th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

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 Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks;

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 Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks, in Category A, until 27 October 1997;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations:

1. The plans featured in the "Nationalparksplan för Sverige" concerning the enlargement of Padjelanta and Sarek make for better protection of both these parks, and it would be advisable for the Swedish authorities to carry them through to completion as quickly as possible and to keep the Council of Europe informed.
2. Formally drafted management plans for both parks would be a valuable aid to their conservation, and would also permit consultation with the Sami (Lapps) people and open the way to their involvement, thus demonstrating that decentralised management will not impair the high standard of conservation for which the parks are noted.
3. Information campaigns would have long-term beneficial effects for both parks. They could be targeted at visitors to teach them about Sami life and on the Sami people to increase their awareness of the value of the natural heritage within their territory. Co-operation with the Jokkmokk museum could be stepped up for this purpose.
4. The major predators should continue to be the subject of research so as to assure their conservation, since the presence of such species in the region represents a very significant European asset.

**APPENDIX IV**

DRAFT RESOLUTION (97) ...

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA  
AWARDED TO THE SAREK AND PADJELANTA NATIONAL PARKS  
(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 of the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (67) 23 awarding the European Diploma to the Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks;

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 Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks until ... 2002;

Attaches to the renewal the following recommendations:

1. The plans featured in the "Nationalparksplan för Sverige" concerning the enlargement of Padjelanta and Sarek, which are likely to enhance the protected heritage of these parks, should be carried through to completion as quickly as possible, and the Council of Europe should be kept informed;
2. It should be ensured that budgetary resources are sufficient to maintain the high standard of the state of conservation of the parks;
3. The management plan for Sarek National Park should be finalised;
4. The Sami people should be fully involved in activities to protect this heritage which is equally that of the Sami people, Sweden and Europe.