

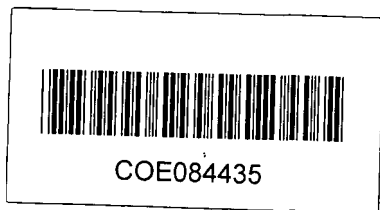
# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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# CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Germano-Luxemburg Nature Park

On-the-spot appraisal

by Alfred H. Hoffmann

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## INTRODUCTION

On 17 April 1964, a State Treaty between the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the Land Rhenish Palatinate of the Federal Republic of Germany was signed in Clerf with the object of creating the first international Nature Park in Europe.

The Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park has an overall area of 790 km<sup>2</sup>. It extends on both sides of the rivers Sûre and Our, in a sequence of deep cut valleys and high plains. Because of its geographical position, much of its primitiveness has been retained. The climate of the Nature Park varies from a wine-growing climate to the rough climate of the Ardennes-Eifel area. There are a number of objects of interest, and relics of a varied history.

The treaty will, as far as possible, protect, maintain and improve the recreational values according to uniform principles in both countries. A combined landscape and development plan has been worked out on ecological principles and will build up a viable and productive cultural landscape where the infrastructure is such that the Nature Park can fulfill its function as a recreational landscape for a large number of visitors.

The legal basis for the creation of Nature Parks is, on the German side, the land planning law of the Land Rhenish Palatinate, where regions which are especially qualified for the recreation of a large proportion of the population can be declared landscape protection areas and be developed as Nature Parks. In Luxembourg, the 1955 law on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources provides ways and means of protecting the landscape.

The Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park lies in the heart of Western Europe. Physically it belongs to the Trier-Luxembourg basin which climatically forms a transition zone between the mild wine-climate of the valley of the Mosel and the somewhat rougher north. The northern part forms the Islek. It contains many slopes and, because of the many valleys, only small high plateaux.

### History

The majority of the Nature Park is old cultural land, especially in the southern part which was settled very early. This was because of the more favourable climatic and soil conditions and the greater ease of road construction.

In the river valleys and the area of the Luxembourg sandstone (Ferschweiler Plateau with border areas, Müllerthal) various finds from the Stone Age have been made.

During the pre-Roman period (Bronze and Iron Ages), the area was increasingly settled; in the Bronze Age, particularly, the southern Gutland and the lower Sûre river were occupied. Celtic artifacts have been found especially on the lower Sûre river and the Ferschweiler Plateau. The little craters (Mardelle), which are also widely distributed in western Lorraine, point to an early Celtic settlement. Such craters are still to be found today in the area of Consdorf.

In the Islek, the earliest settlements were of this period, and were extended during Roman times with the development of a road system. The Roman settlements consisted mainly of single farms and some villas, classical examples being the villas in Bollendorf and the mosaics in Diekirch. Finds from Roman times are scattered over the whole area of the Nature Park.

In Frankish times, new settlements appeared, especially on the better soils of the lower valley of the Sûre, and in the river plains and the favourable altitudes of the Luxembourg sandstone. There generally does not appear to have been such settlement in the climatically harsher Islek. At the beginning of the mass migration, the first stone fortifications appeared in the more favourable areas, and were of importance during the raids of the Normans in the 9th century, and in the 10th century Hungarian threat. There are also a number of fortresses and castles, some dating back to the 11th century.

Luxembourg possesses a list of protected cultural monuments, in the extract of memorial B, No. 68, of 27 November 1967. This was based on article 2 of the Law of 12 August 1927 regarding the conservation and protection of monuments and landscapes of importance to the Nation.

The German part also has a great number of cultural monuments, but these are not yet classified.

### Geology

As far as geology is concerned, the area of the Nature Park is very interesting because many different formations are represented. The only uniform part is in the north (Islek), in which Devonian strata are dominant. In the remaining areas, there is a constant change in the stratigraphy, due to faulting.

In the Islek, in the area of Marnach-Ulfingen as far as Neuerburg and Maxweiler, the lower Emsian is found. In parts, greywacke has weathered to medium deep soils. These are perhaps the best soils of the Islek, as they are relatively loose and porous. In the northern part, the shales of the lower Emsian are very frequently represented.

The Bunter slates of Clerf are interrupted by Wiltzer slates which consist, in the upper Emsian, of shales. On weathering these give only a thin layer of soil at higher altitudes, while in the depressions the resulting clays tend to hold stagnant water.

As a whole the region of the Islek has lime and phosphate deficient shallow soils formed from weathered slates.

In the Gutland, different conditions occur. In the area of Fonhren-Diekirch and Roth-Körperich, for example, upper Bunter Sandstone appears while Muschelkalk (triassic shelly limestone) outcrops in the valley of the Sour, from Reisdorf to Rosport, as well as in the valley of the Gaybach and the Enz.

Lower Keuper formations are relatively rare, the middle Keuper formations being much commoner on the slopes of the Sour valley, between Echternach and Wallendorf, around Eppeldorf, on the river Black Ern, and in the region of Biesdorf.

The central part of the Nature Park consists of Liassic sandstone, which lies on impermeable clay, and this is the reason for the landslides which influence the scenery of the landscape, on its boundaries. The many canyons of the Liassic sandstone also present an imposing picture.

### Vegetation

The vegetation of the Nature Park is extremely varied, due to the diversity of its climatic and soil conditions. Floral elements of Mediterranean type are particularly interesting. In the region of the Islek, with its slate and greywacke derived soils, the high plateau carries montane beech association, but this is quite often replaced by monocultures of spruce. On the northern slopes, apart from the oak-hornbeam association, the interesting "Schlucht-Wald" (an ash-sycamore-beech association) occurs.

In the area of the Keuper soils, there is an oak-hornbeam association; in the valley of the Sûre, on the Muschelkalk soils, orchid-beech associations occur, on the southern slopes, there is a transition to the sub-Mediterranean Turkey oak association; and on the northern slopes, an ash-sycamore-beech association (Schlucht-Wald).

In the region of the Liassic sandstone, a beech-oak association is found, and on the southern slopes a sub-Mediterranean oak-alder or Snowy mespilas association. In the oak-alder association of the southern part of the Park area, some plants from the Mediterranean area also occur.

According to Göbel and Reichling, a range of rare plants occur in the Nature Park, including various species of orchids and ferns.

## Fauna

A two day visit to an area of 731 km<sup>2</sup> is hardly enough to evaluate either the vegetation or the animals in great detail, and I had to rely heavily on reports and documents handed over to me on occasion of the visit. If there is, nevertheless, a lot of detail, it means that a great deal of work has been done in research on the area and that all the data have been considered in developing plans for the Nature Park.

As the whole, the fauna of the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park is similar to that of other Ardennes-Eifel regions. The wildcat, pine marten and stone marten and polecat still occur, as do the weasel, stoat, badger, fox, red deer, wild boar, roedeer, hare, rabbit, partridge and pheasant. Many of these species are hunted.

As far as birdlife is concerned, it should be mentioned specially that the peregrine falcon still occurs, and so do the red kite and the grey heron. The eagle owl, which was formerly found in the area, has been reintroduced.

The richness in insects, such as beetles and butterflies, as well as the variety of snails is an index of a healthy natural balance.

## Communication

Before going into details about communications within the Park itself, I would like to mention its extremely favourable position for recreation in Europe. Within a radius of 200 km, we find the whole conglomeration of the Ruhr, including the towns of Cologne, Essen, Düsseldorf, Wuppertal and Dortmund; as well as the towns of Mannheim, Wiesbaden and Frankfurt; on the Belgian side, the towns of Liège, Brussels and Antwerp are within range. The Dutch province of North Brabant is also within this radius. The Nature Park can thus be reached within a reasonable time from the large, heavily-populated areas of norther Continental Europe. In order to get to the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park from these areas, there are various highways already in existence. On the Luxembourg side, the railway line from Liège to Luxembourg touches the Park between Troivierges and Ettelbrück. However, the railway lines which reach the Park on the German side are used for the transport of goods only.

The road system of the Park itself is adequate and the surrounding roads, which ensure access to it, are sufficient. The roads in a north-south direction, such as the No. 16 in Luxembourg, the E 42 and the L 1 in Germany, serve mainly to bring the traffic to the Park, while the roads leading from east to west provide access within the Park. There are many inter-connecting roads within this system.

It might be mentioned here that the bus service within the Park is not yet satisfactory.

## Tourism

The recreational and tourist possibilities of the area were recognised by the people of Luxembourg before World War II. Not only the extremely diversified and attractive landscape, but also its many cultural and historic monuments appealed to people searching for quiet recreation. The German part of the Park was developed with the view to this kind of recreation only after the creation of the Nature Park "Südeifel" in 1958.

For some time, tourism has been considered an important source of revenue for the inhabitants of the area. Even though the number of hotels has slightly decreased since 1957, the actual number of overnight guests has increased, and a considerable increase can be noted in the overnight camping stays. The Luxembourg part, for instance, had an overnight stay figure of 408,076 in 1961 which had increased to 681,659 in 1967, and camping had increased by 163%. On the German side, the overall figure was 147,322 in 1970.

An inquiry has been carried out among the visitors to the Park for consideration in the landscape and development plan. More than half the tourists are already aware of the existence of the Nature Park and are attracted by its highly diversified landscape. More than 60% stay for more than 10 days at a time. Camping is very much sought after and quiet recreation, such as walking in the forests and along the streams, has priority.

## Natural Monuments

The area of the Nature Park contains as yet no nature reserves, although certain small valleys are planned to be established as such, especially on the Luxembourg side. There are also various biotopes or natural monuments such as the ash-sycamore-beech "Schluchtwald" and the Devil's Canyon ("Teufelsschlucht") near Ernzen.

Luxembourg has yet to create the legal basis for establishing nature reserves of natural monuments. On the German side, we find a number of classified Natural Monuments including special rock formations, the breeding grounds of the peregrine falcon and exceptionally fine specimens of trees. Here it might be worth mentioning that near Hosingen, Luxembourg, which lies on the eastern side of the Park, a game park of 146 ha has been established which contains red deer, fallow deer, mouflon, wild boar, roedeer and foxes. In this game park we also find a number of cultural monuments which are well protected both in the German and in the Luxembourg part.

A "SOS Nature" centre has as its aim the re-introduction of wild animals to their natural life in the wild. In Bollendorf (Germany) a bird park has been established which has great educational as well as recreational value, and adds to the attractions of the regions.

### Future Plans

The Commission for the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park is made up of four members from each country. The chairmanship alternates annually between the countries. Landscape plans have been worked out - according to the treaty between the two countries - to give the Nature Park the character of a privileged landscape, to further its capabilities as a recreational area and, at the same time, to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants. After the production of the working plans for each country, the Commission asked for a combined landscape development plan of the whole Park including the enlargement decided upon on 17 March 1970. The plan coordinates all the measures for the protection, maintenance and management of the landscape based on ecological principles. It covers the whole of the 790 km<sup>2</sup> area of the Nature Park. It can only fulfill its function if the management of its agricultural and forest areas is assured for the future, and at the same time damage to the landscape or injury to its scenery can be avoided.

As far as agriculture is concerned, several methods are proposed to secure the upkeep of the agricultural areas without spoiling the character of the landscape. The Rhenish Ministry for Agriculture, Viticulture and Environmental Protection gives financial support towards the installation of holiday apartments in farms, following the Decree of May 1970.

For the forest areas the plan proposes the following important measures:

- (a) The conservation of the deciduous forests in special places i.e. the already mentioned ash-sycamore-beech "Schluchtwald".
- (b) The transformation of the monocultural forests into mixed forests of deciduous and coniferous trees.
- (c) The treatment of the woodland areas including where and how to crop the forest without causing landscape damage.
- (d) The creation of a healthy fringe to the forest - very important from the point of view of the scenic landscape because it forms a transition zone.
- (e) The establishment of mixed deciduous and coniferous forests in the areas to be reafforested.
- (f) Declaring erosion-prone forested slopes as protected forests.
- (g) Conservation of the narrow valley meadows which are characteristic of the landscape of the Ardennes and the Eifel.

The plan further gives various directions for the future structure of agriculture, and makes suggestions on building. These can be easily implemented if the existing laws are enforced in both countries.

Efforts are to be made on both sides to reduce the number of rubbish dumps, and create syndicates of groups of villages so that waste may be deposited in suitable places. This, of course, presupposes the appropriate utilisation, planning and planting of these areas.

In order to facilitate access to the Park various measures including the creation of parking areas and the elaboration of a bus transport network in the Park are proposed. These proposals are of special importance for the northern part of the Park which is as yet not easily accessible. Bus round trips within the Park are being encouraged as a means of controlling the flow of the visitors.

The elaboration of the system of foot paths is proposed, and the existing pattern of foot paths which start and finish at a parking area are being extended. It is also hoped to establish a system of bridle paths. The paths and the proposed parking areas are to be simply constructed using natural materials, if they cannot be incorporated into existing forest paths. This will secure the best possible integration into the landscape.

Camping places which are at present mainly in the climatically mild valleys of the Sûre and the Our and are near to the forest are proposed as camping grounds, although the leaving of caravans throughout the year in these areas will be forbidden. Suggestions for the establishment and elaboration of camping grounds and their integration into the landscape are given. The planned playgrounds can, in many cases, be simple meadows which are arranged for the seasonal use.

The establishment of water areas and swimming facilities are specially advocated in the plan, and detailed information is given on the damming of rivers and the necessary plantations.

The plan strongly advocates the building of a research station linked to the University of Trier-Kaiserslautern. The area of the Nature Park, as already indicates, has a distinct significance for science especially in the fields of botany, zoology, geology and geography.

The means by which weekend houses and second homes shall be integrated into the landscape to make them as unobtrusive as possible is described in detail.



The plan includes proposals for landscape maintenance, management and amelioration, and suggests plantations and shelter-belts, ways of improving the village structure, restoration of monuments and sites, and the integration of roads. It ends with a summary of planning results showing the focal points in its execution.

### Legal possibilities

The treaty between the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Land Rhenish Palatinate has already been mentioned and forms the basis of this park with its guaranteed borders. It also pledges that it will protect, maintain and develop the park as an area for relaxation on the most uniform possible principles.

The legal base for the establishment of a nature park rests on the German side on the land-planning law (Landes Planungs Gesetz) of the Land Rhenish Palatinate. According to paragraph No. 12 of this law, areas which are particularly suited for recreation of large parts of the population can be made protected landscapes and turned into nature parks. The federal law on town planning "Landschaftsschutz Verordnung" preserves the countryside from the arbitrary building of second homes.

On the Luxembourg side the law of 29 July 1965 on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources is a means of protecting the landscape, its scenery and its resources. Special permission must be obtained from the Minister responsible for forestry for the building of houses in the open landscape. There are strict regulations for the reinstatement of an area after the resources have been used, as well as for felling and replanting of trees and the depositing of garbage and litter. A special section deals with the protection of animals and plants, but hunting and fishing are regulated by two special laws.

A Superior Council for Conservation of Nature has been created to make suggestions to and advise the government on matters of nature conservation. There are strict regulations regarding the establishment of camping areas. These areas are divided into four classes, each with its special regulations. A draft model of a law for the establishment of nature parks, natural reserves and a classification of natural monuments has been prepared.

### Administration

The treaty between the Land Rhenish Palatinate and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg provides for a joint international committee on which each country is represented by four members. The committee is concerned with the planning of the whole park, and makes proposals to both governments for future development. The chairmanship alternates annually between a German and a

citizen of Luxembourg. A permanent secretary assures continuity to the administrative work, and the committee is further supported by two international working parties, one covering the forestry services, the other publicity. These working parties ensure the co-ordination of transfrontier car and pedestrian routes, publication of maps and publicity folders, etc.

The Luxembourg Administration of Water Resources and Forests, in co-operation with the Ministry of Tourism ensures management and supervision. On the German side this task is taken over by the "Verein Naturpark Südeifel" assisted by the forestry services.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources should recommend the following:

1. The increased development of the northern part of the park, which is relatively undeveloped.
2. The enforcement of the existing laws regarding the integration of camping areas in the landscape, unauthorised deposition of garbage, and the building of second homes.
3. The realisation of the Luxembourg Draft Law on Nature Parks, Nature Reserves and classification of monuments.
4. The buying of natural and cultural monuments.
5. The elimination of monocultural forests and their replacement by indigenous species.
6. The definite delineation and demarcation of the quiet zone.
7. The display of posters denoting the park rules for the use of the public.
8. The elaboration of the educational active sports facilities of the park.
9. The development of tourist facilities outside the park boundaries in order to reduce pressure on the park itself.

### CONCLUSIONS

For what one is able to judge from a two day visit to an area of almost 80,000 ha, a very big effort has been made over the whole area of the Nature Park. The people concerned with the Park area are doing their best to guide and direct its development. The villagers and towns folk take a pride in decorating their houses and gardens to give them the rural holiday look.

Recent reconstruction in the countryside, such as the reservoir, has been carefully integrated into the landscape and in a few years' time will hardly be noticed by the visitor.

The scenic landscape, as already mentioned, is highly diversified and of exceptional recreational value; it should be preserved at all costs as it is of primary importance for all of Europe. Even though the character of the landscape has been modified by man, it is rare to find areas of such magnitude and touristic interest largely unspoilt by modern technology, especially if they are relatively close and easily accessible to urban conglomerations.

The vegetation of the area has a distinct scientific interest as has the geological structure.

As the whole, the park area is well marked and the various pathways well posted. Maps of the park which indicate footpaths, camping sites and other places of interest are available everywhere. Other educational pamphlets for schools and tourists are available on demand. Near Echternach the first educational nature trail has been established, describing trees and forest forms. Near Ernzen we find a little house which contains material for lectures on the natural resources, vegetation, fauna and flora of the area. The game park at Hosingen and the bird park in Bollendorf were established for educational purposes.

The maintenance of the park as can be seen from the Recommendations are not yet perfect everywhere, but it must be remembered that I saw the area at the very end of the season.

Given the natural conditions, the legal possibilities, the well developed recreational facilities and the remarkably well worked out master plans and detail plan serving as a base for development, as described in the preceding pages;

Considering that landscapes of such a size, not yet heavily damaged by civilisation get scarcer and scarcer in Europe and that nature recreation is needed even more as the population increases and life becomes more hectic;

Recognising the value of an international nature park in the heart of Western Europe;

I recommend that the application presented jointly by the German and Luxembourg authorities for the award of the European Diploma to the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park be granted in the category of "Protected Landscapes".