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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF  
NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Select Committee of Experts - European Diploma  
Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park

Report on the visit to the site  
(September 1977)

by

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We visited the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park on 5, 6 and 7 September 1977, with Mrs Bauer of the Council of Europe. We wish to thank the authorities who received us and greatly facilitated our task: in Luxembourg, Mr Decker, Forestry Director, and Mr Müller, responsible for nature protection questions; in Germany, Mr Krause, Forestry Director of Rhineland-Palatinate, Mr Feldner, responsible for environmental questions at Trier, Dr Bauer, Head of the Forstamt of Irrel, and Burgomaster Meyer, Chairman of the N P Verein Südeifel.

The park was established in 1965 under a Germano-Luxembourg treaty and received the European Diploma (category C) in 1973.

1. CONSERVATION SITUATION - PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Although I did not visit the park when it was first awarded the European Diploma, it is clear to me that the landscape has maintained its character, beauty and value as a place of relaxation and recreation for years. Furthermore, a joint policy has been followed for the past ten years, aimed at reconciling the development of tourism and recreational facilities with the protection of the qualities of the environment. The results of this policy may be seen in the management of the woodlands, open country, streams and villages.

a. Protection of woodlands

The objective is to maintain the present planted surface and proportion of deciduous trees (about 50%). In Luxembourg, in which privately owned and heavily subdivided woodlands predominate, the state has set aside a subsidy of 30,000 Fr/ha to be allocated to owners for the upkeep or renewal of deciduous plantations. In Germany, in which privately owned forest accounts for 40% of the total woodland, the forestry department helps with the management of private woods and is thus well-placed to guide owners in the choice of species. By these means the balance between conifers and deciduous trees is satisfactorily maintained from the viewpoints of both aesthetics and recreation.

b. Protection of rural landscape

No change in land use (reafforestation, deforestation, opening of new quarries etc) can take place without permission, and a landscape impact assessment must be made before it is granted. Reafforestation is prohibited in grazing valleys in particular: it is important that they should remain free from resinous plantations in order to maintain the diversity of the landscape, the quality of the water as a fish habitat and the forest-game balance. Visibly, this policy is being applied with good effect, thanks to the co-operative attitude of the population. When grasslands are no longer grazed, the park services take over from the farmers and maintain them by mowing.

Other measures have been adopted to protect groves and rows of trees on open land, as well as thickets and hedges. Permission must be obtained before any are removed. Lastly, village public refuse dumps are gradually being closed down, filled in and planted; they have been replaced by central dumps outside the park.

c. Protection of streams

The prohibition of resinous species and upkeep of valley grasslands are very useful measures in themselves, but additional regulations have been adopted to protect the wooded fringes of streams (willows, alder, shrubs); in addition, no new campsites can be set up along river banks. Sewage treatment plants are being installed at the most important points (Echternach, Beaufort).

On the hills in the German section of the park, a few of the water reservoirs mentioned in the development scheme have now been established. Their purpose is to regulate flood-waters and protect the Sûre valley, and they are to be used only exceptionally for recreational purposes.

d. Restriction of town growth

The demand for weekend and holiday homes is considerable as is that for residential (hotels) and recreational (campsites, ponds, swimming pools etc) facilities, and it is the park's function to meet it as best it can. The number of nights spent in the Sûdeifel Park, for example, has risen from 15,000 in 1958 to 18,500 in 1964, and to 941,000 in 1976; the Echternachbrücke campsite alone admitted nearly 100,000 campers in 1977. Tourist pressure is considerable in the Luxembourg part of the park as well, but it was relatively intense there even before the park was founded.

Control of residential development and tourist infrastructures is plainly vital to the protection of the landscapes. For this purpose the following regulations have been adopted:

i. No residence in durable material may be put up outside the boundaries of the built-in area laid down for each village in regional or municipal plans. Exceptions are few and of long standing; every projected new building - even within villages - requires a permit.

ii. After an initial experiment on the German side, which proved to be merely a real estate speculation on the part of the promoter, the summer holiday camp scheme has been abandoned.

iii. Campsites and recreational areas will hereafter be confined to villages or their immediate vicinity, and there will be no more of them along the streams or in the open country. Specific measures have been adopted to that effect in Luxembourg, where campsites are particularly numerous and heavily frequented (40 sites within the park boundaries). Although the German section is larger, there are only 16 campsites in it (8 run by public authorities), and no plans to increase their number.

## 2. PROTECTION OF FLORA, FAUNA AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Although the nature park was primarily created to encourage recreation and tourism in an environment of high quality, in recent years the park authorities have also taken steps to protect the flora, fauna and biotopes. Wetlands and orchid-bearing calcareous plots have been inventoried and a procedure for setting up nature reserves has been put in hand in the German section.

Some sites in the Luxembourg section have already been placed on the official list of reserves, eg the Hymenophyllum rocks and forested ravines in the Luxembourg sandstone area (Schnellert, Kalekapp, Millebaach). A census has also been taken of all old trees with a view to their preservation. Lastly, a proposal has been made to set up a foresty reserve in the Penzebiereg (near Kautenach, on the edge of the park), where there is an extensive stand of Narcissus pseudonarcissus, the only one in Luxembourg.

With regard to fauna, mention should be made of the Bollendorf Ornithological Centre (1976) in which eagle owls are being acclimatised before release. The Grand Duchy has published a list of protected plants and animals.

A great effort has also been made to protect and enhance the archaeological sites (Roman villas at Echternach, Irrel and Bollendorf; temple of Ernzen; Celtic sites at Ferschweiler).

Lastly, a forest museum has been opened together with an ecological walk and two small botanical gardens containing 33 species of orchid, in the forest of Ernzen and the neighbouring area.

## 3. FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

In 1972, to meet the demands of tourism and recreation, the park authorities drew up a development plan extending to 1985. The plan provided for a great many innovations, but economic circumstances have slowed its implementation. It is now the

opinion of the park management that with the existing facilities, which are already substantial and costly to keep up, the first stage of development can be regarded as complete; in future, money and work will be invested in upkeep and improvement of the landscapes. I find this a wise decision, as the pressure exerted on the park by tourism and recreation is already considerable and might quickly get out of hand in some places, for instance the Sûre valley.

Facilities completed or under construction include the following:

a. a few "heavy" items:

- pools and recreational centres of Weiswampach, Echternach and Wiersdorf
- recreational facilities at Bollendorf
- campsites and swimming pools in various places
- animal park at Hosingen

b. a large number of "light" items:

- youth camps, circular walks, hiking trails, bridlepaths, long-range trails (Our-Sûre), frontier bridges, refuges, small parking grounds, rest and picnic bays etc.

Most of these facilities harmonise well with the villages or scenery, although we noticed a few exceptions, such as the Berdorf recreational centre and, above all, the Hosingen game park.

This site, whose original purpose (for which the authorisation was granted) was to illustrate the local forest fauna, is rapidly acquiring the character of a fun fair, a centre for commercial exploitation and real-estate promotion, as is often the case when certain well-known financial agencies launch out into "promoting" nature as a convenient cover for other purposes.

#### 4. LEGISLATIVE BASIS AND REGULATIONS

Only with an appropriate legislative infrastructure is it possible to manage a protected area of such great extent (78,400 ha), divided between two governments whose objective is to reconcile the conservation of the landscape and nature with the sustained growth of recreational and tourist facilities.

On the German side, the park is governed by the Regional Development Act (1966) which defines the concept and provisions to be applied to "Naturparke" (protection of landscape and forest, designation and demarcation of "Kernzone" or quiet areas. The Act also prescribes the drawing up of a "landscape plan", which was in fact published in 1972. The provisions of this Act have been confirmed and supplemented by the Order of 25.6.1971, which lists prohibitions and obligations relating to the conservation of the landscape and surface water, traffic on country lanes, camping and improvements liable to alter the appearance of the terrain. Needless to say, the Südeifel park is also covered by the German Nature Protection Act.

On the Luxembourg side, the relevant legislation is the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources Act (1965), which contains specific provisions relating to maintenance of the landscape (clearing and reafforestation, protection of trees, plants and animals, conversion of consolidated land-holdings into meadows etc). The Order of 15.4.1967 regulates details of campsite installations and facilities. Lastly, residential developments are subject to the 1973 Regional Development Act.

Although these legal instruments differ in the two countries, their objectives converge and are in a sense capped by the Germano-Luxembourg treaty (1965), which provides a framework of guidelines relating to landscape, pedestrian traffic and vehicle parking. It also sets up a management commission.

These laws and regulations existed in 1973; the only new development is the recently enacted Federal German Nature Protection Act, which changes nothing in the legal status of the park. The new Luxembourg nature protection bill is still being debated.

## 5. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

It is difficult to evaluate the actual funds assigned to the Luxembourg section of the park, for it has no corporate status and appears in different sectors of the state budget, eg forestry (forestry work, nature protection, recreational facilities), tourism and public health. The park also receives funds originating in contributions to local tourist offices.

The present annual budget of the German section (Südeifel park) is approximately 300,000 DM (700 DM/km<sup>2</sup>), 4/7 of which is paid by the Land and 3/7 by local authorities (Kreis, Gemeinde) and the Verein (municipal contributions).

The bulk of the budget still covers developments in progress; however, forestry department maintenance teams have been set up in both parts of the park and they naturally have their own operating budget.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this examination we believe we can affirm that the Germano-Luxembourg nature park continues to meet the standards established for protected areas in Category C. In particular, it has a well-prepared development plan, a regular budget and a full complement of regulations which can be used to control the growth of tourism while preserving the character and beauty of the landscape.

In comparison with 1973, the situation has progressed favourably in various respects:

- a. There are many improvements, but on the whole they are inconspicuous and well-integrated; they contain and channel the influx of visitors and residents so that their impact does not interfere with the preservation of landscape and environment.
- b. Projects specifically concerned with conservation (of flora, fauna, aesthetic, biological and archaeological sites) now receive more attention than formerly. In our view these have distinctly improved the park's image for many visitors.
- c. Those in charge of the park's management have jointly prepared and perfected a system of co-operation with local authorities and public departments so as to ensure a balance between the basic functions - scenic, recreational and biological - of the area.

We should like to conclude by drawing the attention of the Council of Europe experts to four points:

1. The Hosingen game park (Luxembourg), whose regrettable evolution we mentioned above, is now a centre of uncontrolled development; measures to redress the situation might very usefully be taken, and the park authorities should be authorised to keep the site under surveillance.
2. The hamlets near the Sûre in the southern part of the park are under such intense pressure from camping and recreation that they are in danger of being overwhelmed by excessive or jarring peripheral development. An appreciable moderation

of mass tourism in this region would seem necessary, as it is the most attractive part of the park and also the most outstanding in respect of natural, historic and archaeological sites.

3. The two plateaux of Echternach and Ferschweiler abut upon a crown of rocky cliffs marking a series of sites of exceptional geological (sandstone chimneys, erosion and dissolution facies), biological (forested ravines, Hymenophyllum stands) and archaeological (neolithic, Celtic, Roman and Frankish remains) interest. This outstanding area is the heart and principal image of the nature park and its development should be very carefully planned on that account.
4. The Penzebiereg site, just west of the park (Luxembourg), contains the only population of Narcissus pseudonarcissus in the Grand Duchy and southern Eifel. It also contains xerophilous plots bearing Anemone pulsatilla, which is most remarkable for the Oesling. This small and completely wooded area (200-300 ha) might be promoted to a nature reserve and annexed to the Germano-Luxembourg nature park as a satellite site.