

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1
on the revised regulations for the Euroean Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5:

Annual report for the year 2024/2025

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: Germany

Name of the area: Natural reserve Siebengebirge

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the Euroean Diploma for Protected Areas:
2025, 2

Central authority concerned:

Name: Bezirksregierung Köln
Address: Zeughausstraße 2-8, 50667 Köln
Tel: 0049 – 221 – 147 - 3403
Fax: 0049 – 221 – 147 - 3339
e-mail: poststelle@bezreg-koeln.nrw.de
www: www.bezreg-koeln.nrw.de

Authority responsible for its management:

Name: Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge
Address: Löwenburger Str. 2, 53639 Königswinter
Tel: 0049 – 2223 90 94 94
Fax: 0049 – 2223 90 97 00
e-mail: poststelle@vv-siebengebirge.de
www: www.vv-siebengebirge.de

¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

The renewal of the European Diploma for the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve was extended unconditionally from 10 July 2024 to 21 September 2031.

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. Ensuring the financial sustainability of nature conservation measures and infrastructure maintenance

The financing of nature conservation measures and infrastructure is secured by transfer income from the state forestry administration, the municipalities of Bad Honnef and Königswinter, the Rhine-Sieg district and the Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge (VVS), as well as public subsidies for other private forests. In October 2025, the VVS established a non-profit foundation to promote scientific research and nature conservation projects in the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve.

2. Decision-making authority of the VVS within the administrative structure of the nature park

The decision-making authority of the Verschönerungsverein für das Siebengebirge continues to be ensured by its seat and vote in the nature park assembly.

3. Monitoring and analysis of experience with various reforestation methods, taking climate change into account

The EU-Habitats Directive and the administrative order for Nature Conservation for the Siebengebirge limit the choice of tree species for reforestation to native deciduous species that are adapted to the climate. In 2025 in total 190 hectares were reforested in groups or clusters, mainly with European beech and oak in the nature reserve. This method is reliable and combines the natural regeneration of native and locally sourced tree species with planting. At the same time, wildlife management, particularly for roe deer, is being continuously adapted to protect the deciduous tree plantations from browsing.

4. Establishment of a wilderness exhibition centre and management of the parking zone by the VVS to secure parking taxes for nature conservation

The possibility of establishing a wilderness exhibition centre is still being examined and evaluated in cooperation with the relevant authorities. At present, the obstacles posed by building and nature conservation laws are difficult to overcome. The central parking zone on Margarethenhöhe is owned by the VVS. The income from parking taxes goes directly to the VVS's nature conservation work.

5. Further development of signage and maintenance of trails redirecting visitors from the nature reserve to other nature park areas

The trail concept will be reviewed in conjunction with the responsible nature conservation authorities in connection with the updating of the nature conservation order and, if necessary, adapted. The Cologne district government is in charge of this process. The procedure is scheduled to begin in 2026.

6. Continuation of research, monitoring and nature conservation projects, including outside Natura 2000 sites

Funding through the large-scale nature conservation project Chance 7:

Creation and optimization of 1.6 hectares of amphibian ponds for yellow-bellied toads, midwife toads and great crested newts on private land in the nature reserve. Monitoring is carried out by the Bonn/Rhein-Erft Biological Station.

Note: The funding programme 'chance 7' of the Federal Republic of Germany will expire in 2026. After that, any necessary maintenance and development measures for the funded projects need to be financed by the Rhine-Sieg district.

Financing from north rhine-westphalian state funds:

Construction of 20 new concrete ponds for the yellow-bellied toad in the north of the nature reserve by the Biological Station Bonn/Rhein-Erft.

Mapping of historical forest management in the area (coppicing for vine stakes) by the biological station of Rhine-Sieg. A high proportion of deadwood with mulm cavities determines the ecological value of these forests. The rare primeval forest relict species Red-thorax click beetle (*Ischnodes sanguinicollis*) was found.

Financing from own resources in private forests

In October 2025 the VVS established a permanent random sample to survey the forest structure in its wilderness area of 523 hectares with 91 permanently marked sampling points. The aim of this inventory, which is being carried out for the first time in the VVS wild area, is to describe the vegetation's condition, especially in the forests of the wild area, to get informations about their naturalness or unnaturalness and biodiversity, and to document their further development through repeat surveys every ten years. The survey intends to provide a sufficiently accurate picture of the structure of the forest and its changes. The method is also used in the Eifel, Kellerwald-Edersee, Harz and Hunsrück-Hochwald national parks and the biosphere reserves Rhoen and South Harz karst Landscape. It allows for coherent, scientific networking within the Eifel-Siebengebirge-Kellerwald biogeographical region.

7. Preservation of open land biotopes in the nature reserve, creation of a biotope network in the nature reserve

Open landscape maintenance (by sheep, goats or mowing) in the nature reserve is ensured through lease agreements between the responsible biological stations and private land owners.

Funding through the Chance 7 support project

Extensive mowing and grazing with sheep/goats on 14 hectares private owned land in 2024.
Targeted habitat: species-rich smooth oat grass meadows and extensive lowland hay (EU code 6510).

8. Acknowledge of the contribution of private landowners to the management objectives of the nature reserve

Private landowners are informed about the possibilities of applying for federal/state funding from North Rhine-Westphalia for measures in line with the management objectives. Information is provided by the state forest administration, the lower nature conservation authority of the Rhine-Sieg district, the biological stations and on the Internet (see also Recommendation No. 6).

9. Replacement of the Council of Europe logo in all information materials, brochures and information boards in the nature reserve

The measures for introducing the European Diploma logo have been and are being implemented step by step. The information boards in the Diploma area will be adapted when the nature conservation order and the trail concept are revised.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

Expansion of the wild area in the state forest of the nature reserve by 200 hectares. The nature reserve now covers a total of 1,126 hectares of developing wilderness without forestry management.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

There were no changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

Permanent monitoring of breeding birds in the Europa Diploma holding site

In October 2025, the VVS launched a permanent monitoring programme in the Europa Diploma holding site. Members are currently trained in a standardised monitoring procedure that is used throughout Germany. Starting in spring 2026, these individuals will map and document the population of breeding bird species in the protected area on VVS-owned land and in the state forest of North Rhine-Westphalia each spring in future. The project is financed by the VVS.

Management of the invasive predator raccoon (Procyon lotor)

The growth of the invasive raccoon population in the protected area now threatens endangered amphibian species of common European interest such as the yellow-bellied toad, midwife toad and crested newt, which are part of the raccoon's prey spectrum. In cooperation with the nature conservation authority of the Rhine-Sieg-district, the VVS is placing traps on its 850-hectare property in the European Diploma holding site as part of its population reduction efforts. The catch results are documented to social class, age structure, gender and day of capture. The project is financed by the Rhine-Sieg district.

Environmental education project 'Green Classroom'

In November 2025, the Siebengebirge Nature Park, together with the VVS and the State Forestry Administration, prepares two so-called green classrooms in the forests of the European Diploma holding site.

Green classrooms are outdoor learning spaces that enable pupils to experience nature first-hand and learn about environmental issues. It offers an alternative to the traditional classroom for projects, working groups or regular lessons. The concept promotes a connection with nature and increases pupils' motivation and well-being.

Lessons take place in the open air and use the natural environment as a learning space. The concept aims to strengthen ecological sensibility and respect for natural resources.

The project is scheduled to start in 2026.

The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
 - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
 - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
 - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
 - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

- 10.1. Improvements made
 - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 10.1.5. Waste management
 - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
 - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas

