

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1
on the revised regulations for the European 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: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year 2020

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: Federal Republic of Germany, Free State of Bavaria

Name of the area: "Weltenburger Enge" Nature Reserve

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

Central authority concerned:

Name: Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz
(Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection)

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Authority responsible for its management:

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(Kelheim County Chief Executive Office)

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Manager of the nature reserve:

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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.

1. conduct an expertise on legal options to stop or at least regulate disembarking of private boats on the right bank of the Danube between the Weltenburger landing place and river kilometre 2416, and to ban overnight camping and campfires in the whole European Diploma area. Report to the Council of Europe by 2020 at the latest;

Since the spring of 2020 the Government of Lower Bavaria has been working on the merger and streamlining of the "Weltenburger Enge" and "Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten" Nature Reserve Ordinances. One of the aims is to define the right bank of the Danube as a "calm zone" in the ordinance. This calming is to be achieved by means of designated trails in the planned core area. In the new Nature Reserve Ordinance putting up tents, overnight camping and campfires are to be banned. Exploratory talks have already been held in the summer with the relevant user groups and land owners concerning the planned revision of the Nature Reserve decree.

In our opinion, an external expert opinion is not needed to clarify this condition.

2. extend, wherever ecologically and touristically worthwhile and as soon as possible, the stricter regulations of the decree on the Nature Reserve Hirschberg und Altmuehlleiten to the area of the Nature Reserve Weltenburger Enge to make the rules more comprehensible for visitors and supervision more effective, and to underline the unity of both sites as an ecological entity;

On 1 March 2020, 197 hectares of the „Weltenburger Enge“ Nature Reserve were also placed under protection as the first National Natural Monument in Bavaria.

Now that the procedure for the National Nature Monument has been concluded, the Government of Lower Bavaria is preparing the merger of the two Nature Reserves "Weltenburger Enge" and "Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten". In this process, among other things, the stricter regulations of the "Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten" Nature Reserve are to be applied to the entire area. Exploratory talks with the relevant user groups and land owners already took place in the summer. The draft ordinance is currently being prepared.

3. take more responsibility for the preservation of the archaeological monument Keltenwall (Celtic wall) and stop further damage and erosion through visitor management or appropriate installations to limit hiking and mountain-biking on the monument, in co-operation with the government agency for monument conservation;

The new Nature Reserve Ordinance is also intended to establish an extensive channelling of visitors that also includes cyclists. Cycling on the Celtic wall will thus be prohibited in future by the ordinance.

A project management post was created at the Government of Lower Bavaria in October 2020 for looking after the National Natural Monument. One task of the project manager will be to adapt and update the existing visitor channelling and signposting concept.

In addition, practicable means of protection for the Celtic wall were discussed with the county archaeologist, the area manager and the nature conservation authority at the County Chief Executive Office during a site visit in the summer of 2020. It was agreed that visitors' awareness should be intensified by providing additional information about the need for preservation. It is planned to display concise archaeological information on boards at the main entrances.

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. achieve, as soon as possible, the formal extension of the European Diploma area to 934 hectares, change the name to "Weltenburger Enge, Hirschberg und Altmuehlleiten" and adapt as soon as possible all signposts, brochures, maps and leaflets to the new area. Prepare and adopt, by 2020, an overall management plan in addition to the existing Natura 2000 management plan;

In our opinion, the best way to implement this recommendation is to merge the two Nature Reserves. Due to current ongoing developments (merger of the two Nature Reserves and revision of the Nature Reserve Ordinance, announcement to designate the state-owned forests as natural forests, appointment of a project manager for the National Natural Monument 'Weltenburger Enge') considerations on an overall management plan for the new Nature Reserve were set aside.

The leaflets on the Nature Reserve and on hiking in the Nature Reserve already cover the entire area.

2. assess the effects of wave disturbances, caused by larger boats, on the river bank and on selected and relevant species, especially fish, freshwater molluscs and dragonflies;

There already exists an expert report from the year 2007 on the “effects of wave disturbances caused by larger boats on fish fauna in the Weltenburger Enge” commissioned by the Kelheim shipping companies. The authorities have meanwhile also carried out a specific search concerning specially protected species, such as the Danube freshwater snail; and in respect of the extension request submitted by the shipping companies an FFH compatibility assessment is to be prepared by the applicant with regard to the expected effects of wave disturbances caused by shipping on the FFH area and on relevant species and their habitats in shallow water and river banks affected by the project.

In the summer of 2020 on-site meetings of the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office (department for water law), the Government of Lower Bavaria and the fishery advisory services were held with the barge operators and the shipping companies. During test operations, framework conditions for future permits were discussed.

3. consider a harmonisation of information boards and a better planning of their distribution across the area and add the European Diploma logo at least to those boards containing information on natural and cultural highlights within the European Diploma area. This includes the information point at the boat landing in Kelheim. Immediately add information about the role of the European Diploma on information boards, at least those at the main access routes;

Reference to the European Diploma is already made in publications and on the information platform at the Kelheim boat landing (including the European Diploma flag ‘Weltenburger Enge’ from March to the end of October).

The area manager has checked all Nature Reserve information boards for the presence of the European Diploma logo. The logo, with a brief description of its meaning, has been added to all hiking information boards. Whenever boards have to be replaced, the logo with a brief description will be directly taken up in the layout. Information material (hiking map/information flyer) has also been supplemented with the European Diploma logo.

After conclusion of the protected area procedure, all information boards and the visitor channelling concept will be updated for both the National Natural Monument and the entire protection area and, where necessary, supplemented with information about the role of the European Diploma.

4. increase and conduct more efficient control of illegal mountain-biking off the official mountain-bike routes;

There are no official mountain bike trails in the area. There are, however, combined footpaths and cycle paths which can also be used by mountain-bikers.

With the new Nature Reserve Ordinance, cycling in the area is also to be regulated.

Moreover, on the initiative of the town of Kelheim, a very constructive first round table on “off-track mountain biking” took place in the summer of 2020. The talks will be continued.

5. carefully examine the opening of official viewing points taking into consideration the natural value of the specific site, and close down a number of uncontrolled and unsafe spots;

In the new Nature Reserve Ordinance there is to be a core area with designated trails. It is also planned to make a restriction to the traditional viewing points ((view to the Weltenburg monastery, view to the Römerwand, look-out point Wieser Kreuz, lookout point Befreiungshalle). In order to protect other rock areas. efficient signposting at these traditional lookout points is required. The planned adaptation and updating of the existing visitor channelling and signposting concept by the new project manager also includes the official lookout points.

6. put an emphasis on the natural succession of forests and the development of more natural forest reserves in the total area and avoid clear cuts of any size. Minimise commercial exploitation of forests and stop the use of heavy machinery in forestry management. Thoroughly assess any intervention in the forest around the Befreiungshalle and refrain from any forest management that cannot be considered ecological;

At the end of May 2020, the Bavarian Minister of Forestry Ms Kaniber announced that almost 5000 hectares of forest in Bavaria would be placed under permanent protection. The two Nature Reserves “Weltenburger Enge” and “Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten” are part of these forest areas that are, with immediate effect, no longer to be used for forest farming. (<https://www.stmelf.bayern.de/wald/lebensraum-wald/234954/index.php>)

In 2020, the Bavarian Administration of State-owned Palaces, Parks and Lakes commissioned a forestry report for the forest areas it administers in the area around the Befreiungshalle. Priority is to be awarded to the preservation of monuments and to nature conservation aspects.

7. recognise the need for professional, on-site supervision of the area, including fieldwork by professional and permanent staff, and envisage an increase in capacity of permanent supervision staff;

The area manager for the two Nature Reserves has been in permanent employment since April 2018. A ranger has been employed (under a limited-term contract) by the Altmühltal Nature Park since 01 April 2019 to look after the nature park area in the Neumarkt, Regensburg and Kelheim counties. The European Diploma area lies within the specified area of the Altmühltal Nature Park.

Since October 2020 the Government of Lower Bavaria additionally employs a project manager for the National Natural Monument 'Weltenburger Enge'.

8. assess the technical possibilities and financial support for restoration of the Klösterl cultural monument.

Measures for preserving the important cultural monument are generally welcome.

The Klösterl is privately owned. The responsibility for maintenance of the monument lies with the owner.

The preservation of the cultural monument cannot be financed from nature conservation funds, for budgetary reasons alone.

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.

Since October 2020 the Government of Lower Bavaria employs a project manager for the National Natural Monument 'Weltenburger Enge'. The National Natural Monument is part of the European Diploma area.

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.

No changes have been made to the boundaries of the area.

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.

In 2018 it was decided by Council of Ministers' decision that the particularly significant parts of the 'Weltenburger Enge' Nature Reserve (Danube with adjacent rocks and steep slopes) are to become Bavaria's first National Natural Monument. On 01 March 2020 the decree on the National Natural Monument Weltenburger Enge came into force. Minister-President Dr. Markus Söder presented the new protected area to the public on 13 February 2020 together with the Bavarian Minister of the Environment Mr. Thorsten Glauber and the Bavarian Minister of Agriculture Ms. Michaela Kaniber.

In the winter of 2019/2020 the Bavarian State Forest Administration carried out several cutting measures in the protected area that were legal but unfavourable from a nature conservation perspective. This was publicly criticised by nature conservation associations. The Bavarian State Forest Administration then refrained from further cutting measures in agreement with the nature conservation authorities.

The high leisure/usage pressure on and along the Danube already recorded in 2018 has increased sharply this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated travel restrictions imposed. Impacts of the extremely high visitor numbers can be identified in all areas of the Nature Reserve (treading damage, new paths, campfire sites, garbage...).

During particularly busy times, additional nature conservation rangers (volunteers from the nature conservation agency) were out giving advice and providing information on the protected area. The water police intensified the number of checks. Verifiable violations were reported to the authorities in charge.

Due to low water, navigation between Kelheim and Weltenburg was partially not possible in the summer.

Owing to the Covid pandemic the guided tours and events of the annual Weltenburger Enge programme were cancelled during the period from March to the end of June. Events from July onwards were held with a limited number of participants. The demand for guided hikes/walks was very high.

The record summer of 2018 and the long dry spells of 2019 and 2020 have caused noticeable damage to beech forests, especially on the south-facing slopes of the European Diploma area. In some cases traffic safety measures had to be implemented by owners, the Bavarian Administration of State-owned Palaces, Parks and Lakes and the Bavarian State Forest Administration. The gradual dying of more trees and a change in the forest landscape are to be expected over the coming years.

For the Kelheim passenger shipping, barge operators and climbing sports, permits have been and are currently being renewed. To this end, talks have been held with all parties involved.

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

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