

**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 2023

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:
Year of last Renewal: 2018. 5 years. Renewed until 2nd March 2028.

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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Verwaltungsstelle Nationales Naturmonument Weltenburger Enge
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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 Weltenburg 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;

The merger of the nature reserves "Weltenburger Enge" and "Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten" has been completed - (see Condition 2). According to § 4 par. 2 no. 4 it is now forbidden to camp, stay overnight or make fires in the entire area. Moreover, according to § 4 par. 3, a rule of keeping to roads and tracks will from now on apply in the new core area of the nature reserve. This means, among other things, that walking is prohibited on the right river bank between the Weltenburg landing place and river kilometre 2416, and also on large parts of the left river bank. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe has thus been met in full. A further expert opinion on this issue is therefore no longer required. In 2023 appropriate prohibition and information signs were set up on paths and gravel banks.

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;

The merger of the nature reserves "Weltenburger Enge" and "Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten" to form the Nature Reserve "Weltenburger Enge, Hirschberg und Altmühlleiten" has been completed and the new Nature Reserve Ordinance came into effect on 5.11.2022. Essentially, the respective stricter regulations were extended to cover the entire area. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled.

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 Nature Reserve Ordinance, which has been in force since 5.11.2022, also explicitly indicates, in addition to a core area with a rule of keeping to specified paths (see above), roads and tracks suitable for cycling in the maps appended to said Ordinance. Accordingly, it is forbidden to walk, ride or drive on the southern end of the Celtic wall, which is inside the core area. The entire length of the Celtic wall is also marked as unsuitable for cycling. In 2023 appropriate barriers fitted with prohibition signs were erected. The barrier erected at the southern end of the Celtic wall was repeatedly torn down by unknown persons and re-erected in a modified form by the National Natural Monument (NNM) Agency. In November 2023 the barriers to prevent bikes from entering were erected by the Kelheim State Forest Administration in close coordination with the responsible archaeology department at the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office (Landratsamt), and appropriate prohibition and information signs were set up. Information on the level of acceptance is not yet available. The success of the measures will be monitored in the coming years by the district archaeology department and the administrative agency. Additional measures or barriers may be necessary. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled.

4. forbid access including for fishing to the right (southern) riverbank of the Danube and to the gravel banks between Weltenburg monastery and river kilometer 2416 (see also condition 1 of the 2018 renewal). The same prohibition should also apply to the left side of the Danube wherever ecologically worthwhile.

In the nature reserve it is forbidden according to § 4 par. 1. sentence 2 no. 14 to capture, injure or kill wild animals. Orderly fishing practice and fishery protection, taking into account specific provisions, is exempted from the prohibitions of the Nature Reserve Ordinance according to § 5 sentence 1 no.11. In the core area, however, fishing away from the freely accessible roads, tracks and spots shown in the maps appended to the Nature Reserve Ordinance may only be carried out by persons with fishing rights or by fishery leaseholders who are directly authorised to exercise fishing rights themselves, or by holders of annual fishing permits, cf. § 5 sentence 1 no. 11 b). After weighing up legitimate interests when enacting the Nature Reserve Ordinance, the granting of orderly fishing practice is reasonable. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled.

5. set a mandatory minimum depth of the waterway in relation to the water level gauge at Kelheim as well as a mandatory maximum speed for navigation on the Danube in the Weltenburger Enge, which might differ between upstream and downstream rides. These limitations should be based on a study on the impact of cruises in the Weltenburger Enge, conducted to assert the consequences on ichthyofauna and macrozoobenthos. The results of this study shall determine the limitations for cruises with regard to water level and speed and help avoid demand-oriented arbitrary adjustments. The minimum depth and maximum speed should take into consideration the interests of nature protection, fishery and ship owners.

The Kelheim County Chief Executive Office has issued water permits for passenger shipping (Notices dated August 2022, limited until 2031) and for private barges with up to 6 passengers (Holzzillen) (Notice dated May 2021, amended in March 2022 and August 2023, limited until 2031). Based on the transitional provisions in the new Nature Reserve Ordinance, these are valid up to their expiry date. The respective Notices set out detailed requirements regarding the number of trips, permitted speeds for upstream and downstream rides as well as regarding the required minimum draft for passenger shipping. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled

6. increase the number of skilled and competent wardens or rangers in order to manage the rising number of visitors and the violations of set rules. This should include other authorities such as the police. Allocate wardens and rangers with the necessary means and capacity to enforce the regulations and guarantee a balanced coexistence between touristic and leisure activities and nature protection. Their competences should be reviewed and strengthened when appropriate.

Since November 2021, 2 rangers financed by REACT-EU (a funding programme of the European Social Fund for managing the Covid-19 crisis) have been working at the administrative agency of the National Natural Monument. Owing to this funding situation, their duties mainly involve providing visitors with information, environmental education and monitoring of the area. In addition, since July 2022 there has been a part-time position for digital visitor channelling, which is also funded by EU-REACT. The Nature Reserve Ordinance is being enforced in cooperation with the water police, the police authorities and the Kelheim County Chief Executive Office. The aforementioned posts will be taken up in the jobs programme of the NNM administrative agency as of January 1, 2024, initially for a limited period. The official powers of the administrative agency rangers can be extended as from 2024. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled.

7. reduce, at least in the core area the existing road network to those roads and paths, which are officially designated and marked as hiking, biking and mountain-biking routes for visitors. Any unmarked route in the core zone shall be dismantled through natural barriers of falling trees, cracking of the surface or other measures. It would be helpful to extend these limitations and measures to the whole nature reserve. The same arrangements shall apply for outlooks, which shall be reduced and set up in secured spots.

In the new Nature Reserve Ordinance (see Condition 2), accessibility of the paths is regulated in detail by the Appendices. All officially designated and marked hiking and cycling routes are thus preserved. Roads and paths suitable for cycling are marked for the entire area, any biking outside of these paths is thus prohibited. In the core area of the nature reserve there is a rule of keeping to roads and tracks (see above). All paths or tracks without official markings are not secured or maintained and are blocked or made unidentifiable using natural materials such as falling trees or branches. As most of the forest in the nature reserve is now also designated as a natural forest in accordance with Art. 12 a of the Bavarian Forest Act (BayWaldG), with an increase in the number of falling trees, all paths and tracks that are not actively kept open will already become quieter in the medium term due to the fact that unauthorised mountain-biking will become considerably more difficult anyway. In addition, the ban on leaving paths in the core area is constantly communicated by means of visitor channelling in the form of signposting and information boards. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled.

8. concerning the Celtic Wall, alternative routes shall be designated to stop the ongoing destruction of the archaeological monument.

There is no prospect of an alternative route for the long-distance quality hiking trail "Altmühltaler Panoramaweg" which runs along the Celtic wall and boasts supra-regional significance, because the provision of new paths is not compatible with the conservation purpose of the nature reserve and is therefore prohibited pursuant to §4 par. 1 no. 3 of the Nature Reserve Ordinance. An attractive alternative route further away has not yet been found. Due to the ban on cycling, an alternative cycle route is still being discussed. However, the former idea of dismantling the Klostertalstrasse has turned out to be unrealistic. More recently, in consultation with the Kelheim district archaeology department, nature protection agencies and the Bavarian State Forest Association (BaySF) Kelheim, barriers for cyclists have been set up at two access and exit points of the Celtic wall by BaySF Kelheim. We will need to monitor whether reduced bike traffic is sufficient for protecting the Celtic wall. This procedure has been coordinated with the Kelheim district archaeology department. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe cannot be fulfilled.

9.Share the final version of the regulation with the Council of Europe as soon as it has been accepted by the government.

The new legally binding Nature Reserve Ordinance was submitted to the Council of Europe by email on 07.12.2022

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;

The request to extend the existing European Diploma area to the entire "Weltenburger Enge Hirschberg und Altmuehlleiten" nature reserve was approved by the Bern Convention Secretariat in 2023. In addition to the Natura 2000 management plan, a comprehensive Ecological Development Concept for the Danube from 2016 is already on file, which we still consider to be well-founded. We therefore do not consider the preparation of a further general management plan to be a pressing issue at this time. The leaflets on the nature reserve and on hiking in the nature reserve already relate to the entire area. These are due to be revised in 2024

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;

The FFH compatibility assessment commissioned by the shipping companies and carried out by "ezb - TB Zauner GmbH", dated December 2020, has been submitted and has been reviewed by the authorities in charge - see the 2020 Report. The assessment for the vessel "MS Renate" (with jet propulsion) has not been completed as the vessel will no longer be operated in the nature reserve in future. Further studies on the development of stocks of individual fish species will be carried out by the Bavarian Environment Agency (Landesamt für Umwelt – LfU), and can be taken into account for the continued management of the area, if required.

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;

Currently, all brochures, leaflets, information boards and signs in the nature reserve are being revised by the administrative agency. Information on the European Diploma will be added in the process.

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

According to § 4 par. 2 no. 1 of the new Nature Reserve Ordinance, cycling off routes designated as suitable for cycling is prohibited. No further cycle routes or mountain bike trails will be tolerated. Controls will be carried out by the rangers on site. At critical points, attention is drawn to these prohibitions by way of signs or barriers. Unfortunately, enforcement is proving difficult, as signs and barriers have been demolished or removed by unknown persons. In addition, digital guidance will be implemented by checking trail suggestions in various outdoor apps. Wherever possible, a correction of those routes that are undesired will be carried out directly in these apps by the digital ranger. It is also to be expected that the mountain-bike guidance concept commissioned by the town of Kelheim will lead to a redirection to other less sensitive areas in the county district.

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;

Due to the designated core area of the nature reserve and the associated rule of keeping to roads and tracks, only areas that can be considered official viewing points may be entered. Entering most of the rock outcroppings is thus prohibited. The protection of the rock outcroppings will, for the time being, be maintained using the existing information boards and by the rangers addressing the visitors directly. Information is made available on sensitive rock outcroppings by way of information boards and access restriction signs which have been updated for the nature reserve and also by digital means, and access is regulated using prohibition signs and also barriers, where necessary.

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;

Commercial exploitation of the state forests in the area of the nature reserve is prohibited, on the one hand, by the new Nature Reserve Ordinance (cf. § 4 par.1 no.15) and is only permitted in private forests under certain restrictions (cf. §4 par.1 no.16). On the other hand, the Bavarian State Forests have also opted out of

commercial exploitation by classifying their forest areas as natural forests (see Report 2020). In private forests, natural forest development is eligible for financial support through the Bavarian Contract-Based Conservation Programme for forests (VNP Wald). For forest areas managed by the Bavarian Administration of State-owned Palaces and Lakes, a management concept was agreed on with the higher Nature Conservation Authority of the Regional Government of Lower Bavaria in February 2021. Priority is awarded to the preservation of monuments while, at the same time, giving attention to nature conservation aspects. Under this management concept any necessary measures may still be carried out in the state forest, cf. § 5 s. 1 No. 6 of the Nature Reserve Ordinance.

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;

At present, 5 people are already working for the administrative agency, which is currently being set up. In addition to the permanent positions for management and environmental education, the 2.5 ranger positions are, for now, limited up to the end of 2027. In the further expansion process, besides an additional administrative employee as from 2024, a specialist is being sought to manage the coordination and organisation of further area supervision tasks.

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

9. the maximum number of barges, the number of admissible journeys, the speed of the barges (which was recently raised from 5 to 15 resp. 20 km/h), and the temporal limitations shall be fixed mandatorily in accordance with relevant organisations, first of all with the fishery. The provisions must consider the 7 T-PVS/DE(2022)12 protection requirements of the landscape and its fauna and flora between Kelheim and Weltenburg. The currently permissible values do not seem to be appropriate.

See Condition 5. The water permits for passenger shipping were issued in 2021 and amended with the Notices of 2022 and 2023. The number of barges, maximum rides as well as maximum speeds are regulated and subject to conditions. Opinions were obtained from all relevant organisations and taken into consideration. The conditions are based, among other things, on the FFH compatibility assessment carried out by "ezb – TB Zauner GmbH, of December 2020, which did not identify any significant threat to flora and fauna from the barge trips, provided the required conditions are met.

10. prohibitions as laid out in the draft regulation shall be specified in their spatial effect. This applies to the Danube as well as to the terrestrial part. For the Danube, the zone which can be used for navigation of tourist ships, barges and all kinds of private boats like kayaks, rubber boats etc. should be exactly defined. The zone should be illustrated on maps and could be determined in accordance to the main current line or to the central line of the waterway.

The designation of the areas around the Danube as core area of the nature reserve is shown on the maps attached as appendices to the Ordinance. The terrestrial part of the area has become significantly quieter as a result of the rule of keeping to tracks and paths and the designation of just a few areas that may still be entered. In the aquatic area it is not possible to enforce additional spatial restrictions, which is why these were not included in the new Nature Reserve Ordinance.

11. ensure that the number of visitors does not exceed the carrying capacity of the protected area and that all regulations and limitations are fully observed by users and visitors. This can be achieved by alternative offers for tourists or limitations e.g. for private boats on the Danube in the Weltenburger Enge.

All regulations and restrictions relating to the core area subject to the rule to keep to paths and tracks are also shown on maps attached as appendices to the Ordinance. The provisions of the new Ordinance aim to channel the flow of visitors to less sensitive areas. Keeping a distance to the sensitive areas, as well as observing a respectful behaviour there, will result from the prohibitions of the Ordinance. Further offers for tourists are not always in the interest of nature conservation as there are also sensitive zones in the surrounding area that have so far hardly been disturbed by visitors. Visitor channelling and information are provided through additional environmental education services.

2. 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.

The administrative agency of the National Natural Monument (NNM) is only responsible for the area of the NNM. Outside of this area the duties are limited to visitor guidance and visitor information relating to this area or duties with direct spatial effect. This is always coordinated with the responsible authorities. Outside the NNM responsibility remains with the District of Kelheim Lower Nature Conservation Authority.

In the budget of the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection (StMUV) an extra category was created for the organisation and duties of the NNM administrative agency and provided with sufficient resources.

At the Kelheim Forestry Agency, the district forester in charge of the area has changed again. The new contact person is Ernst Süß. The nature reserve is also part of the Altmühltal Nature Park. Since August, Jan Schütt has been the ranger responsible for the Kelheim district, among other duties.

3. 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.

In 2023 no change

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

Guided tours and events of the annual Weltenburger Enge programme could be carried out to their full extent again in 2023. The event programme was again drawn up in cooperation between the district of Kelheim and the Regional Government of Lower Bavaria. The interest in guided hikes and nature experience was high, but has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. For the first time, an online procedure was used for registrations in cooperation with the Kelheim Tourism Association.

In several events, some lasting several days, information was provided on the nature reserve in conjunction with environmental education measures (Forest Day, as well as Regional and Environmental Days in Kelheim, Ranger Day, the Freyung State Garden Show, kick-off event for Nature Talents).

Successful broods of eagle owls, peregrine falcons and jackdaws were confirmed in the area within the scope of rock breeding monitoring.

The stocking of the Danube with zingel and schraetser by the Bavarian Environment Agency (LfU) was carried out at several points upstream of the protected area. The success of the measure is being monitored by the LfU.

Within the framework of the "living deadwood" project the Bavarian State Institute of Forestry (Bayrische Landesanstalt für Wald und Forstwirtschaft) carried out sampling and a series of bat surveys. Vegetation surveys and core samplings were also carried out on a beech tree in collaboration with the Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences.

On behalf of the LfU, BNGF GmbH carried out electrofishing studies in the Kelheim/Weltenburg area in connection with the fish monitoring at the Irsching power plant.

High leisure/usage pressure on and along the Danube continues. The effects are still visible in all parts of the protected area. Verifiable violations were reported to the authorities.

During the low water conditions in the summer and autumn passenger shipping was suspended.

The climbing concept has been revised in collaboration with the Climbing Association (IG Klettern), the German Alpine Association (DAV) and the Lower Nature Conservation authority (UNB). The framework conditions imposed by the new Nature Reserve Ordinance have been integrated.

The Bavarian State Forest Administration had to implement traffic safety measures predominantly in the area of the Klostertalstrasse and Klösterlweg. Moreover, traffic safety measures were carried out by the Water Management Agency of Landshut along the Danube and by the Kelheim Municipal Building Yard at the rock face along the Asamstrasse.

In the course of remediation work on the access road to the Befreiungshalle, a detour route through the protected area was required to provide access for employees.

In September the Stadtwerke Kelheim (Kelheim public utility corporation) carried out a clearance cut in the area of the low-voltage overhead power lines to the Klösterl observing the required conditions and instructions.

In July and September, events (triathlon, canoe races) were organised by the Canoe Club Kelheim in the protected area in agreement with the lower and higher Nature Conservation Authorities.

For the passage of boats through the Weltenburger Enge exemption notices subject to conditions were issued (district fishing association, volunteer fire department, THW (German Federal Agency for Technical Relief), mountain rescue service and the Bundeswehr)

The rock outcropping monitoring at permanent monitoring sites was continued by Dipl. Biol. C. Linhard on behalf of the Kelheim landscape conservation association (Landschaftspflegeverband Kelheim VöF e.V.), financed by the Government of Lower Bavaria

In September, extensive maintenance work to preserve the rock outcrop vegetation was commissioned by the Landschaftspflegeverband Kelheim VöF e.V. and financed by the Government of Lower Bavaria.