

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)2
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 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: 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. 7 years. Renewed till 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 Section 4(2)(4) it is now forbidden to camp, stay overnight or make fires throughout the entire area. Moreover, according to Section 4(3), visitors are from now on required to stay on designated roads and tracks in the new core area of the nature reserve. This means, among other things, that walking is prohibited on the right riverbank between the Weltenburg landing place and river kilometre 2416, and also on large parts of the left riverbank. A further expert opinion on this issue is therefore no longer required.

The signs prohibiting access to the gravel banks were extended and had to be renewed only rarely compared to the year 2024. Thanks to the specially designed and visually appealing solid wood signs with now better anchoring to prevent drifting during flood events, as well as the frequent presence of the rangers, the frequency of disturbances on the gravel banks was significantly reduced. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe has thus been met in full.

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;

See Report 2023. 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 November 2022, also explicitly indicates that, in addition to a core area with a rule of keeping to specified paths (see above), there are 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 located within the core area. The entire length of the Celtic wall is also marked as unsuitable for cycling. As intended, the measures described in the 2024 report are proving increasingly effective. Although damage to the Celtic Wall cannot be completely prevented, this damage is minimized through the continuous reduction of mountain bike traffic. The success of these measures will continue to be monitored by the district archaeology department and the administrative office in the coming years. 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.

See Report 2023. 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.

See Report 2023. 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.

See Report 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.

See Report 2023. 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.

See Report 2024. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe cannot but also must not be fulfilled to protect the Celtic Wall.

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 December 7, 2022. The condition formulated by the Council of Europe is thus fulfilled.

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 Altmuehleiten" 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;

See Report 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;

See Report 2023.

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;

Brochures and leaflets are continuously updated. However, new information and notice boards in the nature reserve have still not yet been renewed due to coordination processes with other stakeholders. Naturally, information about the European Diploma will also be included. In 2025, in cooperation with the Kelheim District Tourism Association, the directional signage for hiking trails will undergo a fundamental overhaul. In the area of the National Natural Monument and the surrounding nature reserve, the signage will also feature the European Diploma logo alongside other logos. The new signs will be installed in spring 2026.

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

See Report 2024.

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;

See Report 2024.

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. 2 of the Nature Reserve Ordinance.

The final management plan for the natural forest that was coordinated with the Bavarian State Forest Association, Kelheim Forestry Operation, issued in February 2025 defines the necessary measures for addressing an unnatural condition caused by human impacts (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;

Currently, six people are employed at the administrative office, which is still in the process of being established. In addition to the permanent positions for management and environmental education, 2.5 ranger positions are temporarily funded until the end of 2027. Following the additional administrative employee since January 2024, the interviews for filling the specialist advisor position will take place in December 2025. We expect the hiring to take place by February 2026 to handle the coordination and organization of further tasks related to the supervision of the area.

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

see Report 2024.

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 Report 2023.

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. The shore areas are protected by the ban on landing and the ban on disturbance, regulated by the Nature Conservation Area Ordinance. The landing points for barges are regulated in detail in the corresponding exemptions. Apart from crossing at Weltenburg Monastery, only so-called loop trips are permitted for barges, which can only be boarded at a groyne in the Wipfelsfurth. For navigation, there is zoning due to the specifications of a minimum flotation of 40 cm in the corresponding exemptions. (see also Condition 5)

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.

See Report 2023.

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.

In the budget of the Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection (StMUV) a separate chapter is set up in the StMUV budget for the establishment and tasks of the NNM administrative office. Despite the delay to the exhibition's financing, the budget for managing the protected area as well as for the exhibition are sufficiently secured for 2026. This indicates that the financial resources for the core management and supervision of the protected area itself are stable for the upcoming year. The offices of the NNM administrative office in Kelheim moved in March 2025 into permanent premises until 2035. Therefore, this important goal for the establishment of an efficient administrative office is achieved.

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 in 2025.

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.

The 'Weltenburg Narrows National Nature Monument', the core of the European Diploma Area, was honoured with its own special stamp in 2025. Issued by the Federal Ministry of Finance from a competitive selection process, the stamp was officially presented at an event featuring high-ranking officials including Bavarian State Minister Thorsten Glauber, District Administrator Martin Neumeyer and Rainer Haselbeck (Government of Lower Bavaria). The Free State of Bavaria and the Federal Republic of Germany thus underline the global importance of this Lower Bavarian natural jewel.

The designation of the Weltenburger Enge as a National Natural Monument is linked to the establishment of a nature experience centre. In 2024, the government of Lower Bavaria rented a suitable property from 2026 until 2036. Due to a delay in the provision of funds for the planned exhibition, the commissioning of a planning office was delayed till November. The planned exhibition, which will provide information about the National Natural Monument and valuable areas of the nature reserve, is scheduled to open in May 2027.

A citizen filed an application for judicial review against a Nature Reserve Ordinance, arguing that the requirement for cyclists to remain on designated paths restricted his freedom and constituted unequal treatment compared to hikers. The applicant withdrew the application during the oral hearing in July 2025 after it became clear it would likely be unsuccessful. The ordinance is now final and legally binding with no other proceedings pending,

Shipping was suspended during the draught periods in spring and summer.

In July, a military helicopter landed on a gravel bank within the nature reserve's core area without reasonable cause. The pilot briefly exited the aircraft before flying on. The violation was identified via a public flight movement portal and reported to the responsible Air Force Office. The Air Force later responded that the flight complied with military regulations but used the incident to raise awareness among their crews regarding nature reserve rules.

To ensure the crossing and the use of the ferry as a connecting municipal road between the districts of Stausacker and Weltenburg, it was necessary to remove sediment from the Danube in the area of the Stausacker ferry landing. The measure was carried out by the Landshut Water Management Office at the request of the Town of Kelheim and required intensive coordination between the responsible licensing authorities of the Kelheim District Office and the Government of Lower Bavaria.

The Landshut Water Management Office carried out various measures to optimize the protected area in cooperation and coordination with the NNM administrative office. Selected trees were protected from damage by the resident beaver, and various measures were implemented against the spread of neophytes like goldenrod or ash-leaf maple.

The Office for Food, Agriculture and Forests Abensberg-Landshut (AELF), in coordination with the Bavarian State Forests (BaySF), has developed a management concept for the 'Buchenwälder in der südlichen Frankenalb' natural forest area (so called "Naturwald" as a significant category under forest law in Bavaria). These natural forest areas are also largely located within the European Diploma Area. The objective is to establish a green network of near-natural forests important for biodiversity on 10% of the state forest land, including a natural forest hiking trail with information boards within the protected area.

*The Bavarian State Office for the Environment (LfU) has stocked the Danube with schraetzer (*Gymnocephalus schraetzer*) in several places above and below the protected area. The success of the measure is being monitored by the LfU.*

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

A spruce maintenance concept and a track maintenance concept were coordinated with the Bavarian State Forests (BaySF) Kelheim. Spruce trees were removed from the natural forest area and bark beetle control measures carried out

Responsibility for path maintenance and traffic safety is shared among the property owners. As every year the Bavarian State Forest Association, the Landshut Water Management Office, the town of Kelheim and the Bavarian Palace Administration fulfilled their duty's to maintain safety on the premises.

Due to problems with premises liability at "places of rest and leisure" benches had to be removed in recent years or could no longer be replaced. Otherwise, disproportionately extensive interference with the surrounding tree population would have been necessary by those responsible for fulfilling the safety obligations. Now, two covered seating areas have been erected by the Bavarian State Forests Kelheim - in

cooperation with the Kelheim Forest Owners' School and in coordination with the administrative office of the National Nature Monument.

The main hiking trail along the Danube towards Weltenburg was tested for accessibility in cooperation with the Kelheim District Office, a volunteer wheelchair user, and the Kelheim Tourism Association (Tourismusverband Kelheim). Unfortunately, it turned out that the trail cannot be classified as accessible starting from the Wipfelsfurt due to the gravel being too coarse and is definitely not accessible from the steep section after the Wipfelsfurt onwards.

The German Alpine Club (Deutscher Alpenverein) carried out extensive and necessary restoration work on the climbing routes in the Bischofsbucht and on the Löcherwand. The restoration work was conducted in consultation and coordination with the rangers of the National Nature Monument administration office.

In the area of the Schellneckwand, bolts on the top of the rock face were removed by the responsible rock face maintainer to protect the vegetation, and two deflection hooks were placed lower down. This measure was coordinated by the Lower Nature Conservation Authority Kelheim.

At the maintenance yard near the Liberation Hall (Befreiungshalle), the installation of a PV system and the laying of modern telecommunication lines was approved.

The extensive annual maintenance work to preserve the rock outcrop vegetation, which is commissioned by the Kelheim District Landscape Conservation Association (Landschaftspflegeverband Kelheim VöF e.V.) and financed by the Government of Lower Bavaria (Regierung von Niederbayern), could only be realized to a very limited extent, but it is expected to take place almost in full again in the coming years.

Successful breeding of eagle owls, peregrine falcons and jackdaws was again confirmed in the area as part of rock breeding monitoring. Furthermore, monitoring was carried out on gravel breeders/spawners, amphibians, and the FFH Annex II species *Mannia triandra*.

The Weltenburger Enge continues to be a focal point of public interest, with coverage in the press and on TV, as well as contributions to educational efforts and professional nature conservation.

High leisure/usage pressure on and along the Danube continues. The effects are still visible in all parts of the protected area. There are still reported violations but they have decreased since January 2025 and compared to the year 2024.

In April, July and September there were several events in the protected area. The German rowing meeting, as well as the triathlon and canoe race organized by the Kelheim Canoe Club, each in agreement with the lower and higher nature conservation authorities.

Approved passages were made through the Weltenburger Enge with boats from the district fishing association, volunteer fire department, THW, mountain rescue service, Uniper power station and Ulmer Schachtel.

Guided tours and events of the Weltenburger Enge annual program could be carried out again in 2025 on the usual large scale. The cooperation between the district of Kelheim and the government of Lower Bavaria was continued in the creation of the event program. Interest in guided hikes and nature experiences is furthermore high.

Information about the nature reserve was provided at several events in connection with environmental education measures. At the Tourism meeting of the district of Kelheim in Weltenburg, the State Garden Show in Furth i. Wald, the Regional and Environmental Days in Kelheim and three times with a newly purchased mobile information stand on different spots around the Weltenburger Enge.

We followed the invitation for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the European Diploma for Protected Areas in Granada on 21-22 May 2025. Thank you for this excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and network with representatives of other protected areas from all over Europe!