

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2018)2
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018
at the 1321th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year 2024

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 (StMUV)
(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. A further expert opinion on this issue is therefore no longer required. The signs prohibiting access to the gravel banks had to be replaced several times in 2024 as floods had washed away the prohibition signs. In view of this problem, special, visually appealing solid wood signs were used as a precautionary measure. Nevertheless, due to the frequency of flood events, there were several short periods in which no signs were erected. To address this problem, different fastening methods will be tested next year. 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 5.11.2022, 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. The barrier erected in 2023 at the southern end of the Celtic wall is now accepted by visitors. In November 2023 the barriers to prevent bikes from entering and appropriate prohibition and information signs were set up. The frequency of cyclists has been somewhat reduced as a result. However, the barriers are still occasionally disregarded. We anticipate growing acceptance of this measure through direct educational efforts by rangers, combined with information panels explaining the historical significance of the Celtic Wall. 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.

Since November 2021, two rangers have been employed at the administration office of the NNM. Their primary responsibilities include visitor information, environmental education, and monitoring the area.

Additionally, since July 2022, a part-time position has been dedicated to digital visitor management. The funding for these 2.5 posts was taken over by the Bavarian State Ministry for the Environment and Consumer Protection (StMUV) at the end of 2023 following EU-REACT, initially for a limited period until the end of 2027. The enforcement of the Nature Reserve Ordinance is carried out in collaboration with the water protection police, local police, and the Kelheim district authority (LRA Kelheim). Sovereign powers for the rangers of the administration office have not been deemed necessary for enforcing the NSG regulations, as fines have so far only been issued for motorized boats, cars, or campers. In all other cases, such as the economic use of the protected area or drone flights, timely regulatory interventions have been sufficient. The option of giving the rangers sovereign powers is still available if necessary. The rangers will attend the legally required training courses in 2025. 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.

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. In 2022, 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. Furthermore, 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. Fortunately, the Kelheim mountain biking project "Trails of Kelheim" is now taking concrete shape. In October 2024, two new MTB trails were established on the southern side of the Danube, near the nature reserve (NSG). Indirectly, this could help reduce the strain on the Celtic Wall. See also Recommendation 4. 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 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 and are revised for each new edition.

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 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.

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. Enforcing the prohibitions is challenging, as signs and barriers have been vandalized or removed by unknown persons. However, there is a gradual increase in acceptance of the restrictions. 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. Fortunately, the mountain biking project "Trails of Kelheim," initiated by the city of Kelheim, is now taking concrete shape. In October 2024, two new MTB trails were established on the southern side of the Danube, near the nature reserve but beyond State Road 2233. This is expected to indirectly alleviate pressure on the nature reserve as a whole.

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. Fortunately, the weather patterns—often too dry in 2022 and 2023 and marked by heavy rainfall in 2024—resulted in some tree falls in the area of the viewpoints. The resulting natural barriers have positively influenced the acceptance of rope barriers, leading to an overall trend toward calming the sensitive cliff-top areas.

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. A management plan for the natural forest is currently being coordinated with the Bavarian State Forest Association, Kelheim Forestry Operation, to define 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, a specialist advisor is expected to join around October 2025 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.

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. To our knowledge, the Klösterl has been sold by now. We are not aware of any official confirmation of the sale, the new owner or any plans to develop the property

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.

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.

The offices of the NNM administrative office in Kelheim are still in temporary accommodation until February 2025. From February 2025, the administrative office will move into permanent premises until 2035. This will achieve an important goal for the establishment of an efficient administrative office. A separate chapter has been set up in the StMUV budget for the establishment and tasks of the NNM administrative office.

After just one year, the forest ranger responsible for the area changed again at the Kelheim forestry operation. The previous contact, Ernst Süß, has retired. The new district forester is Max Hecht.

The nature reserve is also part of the Altmühltal Nature Park. Since August 2023, Jan Schütt has been responsible there as a ranger for the district of Kelheim. The cooperation is very good and takes place through regular meetings of the rangers.

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 2024.

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 designation of the Weltenburger Enge as a National Natural Monument is linked to the establishment of a nature experience center. In 2024, the government of Lower Bavaria rented a suitable property from 2026. The administrative office is currently preparing a tender to commission a planning office with the design and construction of the interactive experience exhibition. The planned exhibition, which will provide information about the National Natural Monument and valuable areas of the nature reserve, is scheduled to open in 2026.*
- *Guided tours and events of the Weltenburger Enge annual program could be carried out again in 2024 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 once again high, but difficult to compare with the pre-coronavirus situation, as the online registration process introduced in 2023 has also changed the target audience. More guests in the region and fewer older locals tend to take part in the program.*
- *Information about the nature reserve was provided at several events in connection with environmental education measures (Ranger Action Day, Freyung State Garden Show)*
- *Successful breeding of eagle owls, peregrine falcons and jackdaws was again confirmed in the area as part of rock breeding monitoring.*
- *The Bavarian State Office for the Environment (LfU) has stocked the Danube with zingel and scaup 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*
- *Passenger shipping was suspended during the summer floods.*
- *Due to the flooding in summer, heavy rainfall and the generally wet weather, the condition of the hiking and cycling trails in the protected area deteriorated significantly in some places. Some areas could be repaired by the Kelheim municipal building yard. Trail maintenance in the National Nature Monument is organized by the administrative office.*
- *The Bavarian State Forest Association, the Landshut Water Management Office and the town of Kelheim had to carry out road safety measures in the spring and after the floods in June.*
- *In 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.*
- *After a storm in spring, the power line for the monastery had to be restored.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *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.*