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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**GROUP OF SPECIALISTS -EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS
9-10 FEBRUARY 2012, STRASBOURG
ROOM 14, PALAIS DE L'EUROPE**

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**FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA FOR PROTECTED AREAS
STATE OF THE NETWORK, ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF
HABITATS AND BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONS ALREADY REPRESENTED AND
PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPING THE NETWORK
INTO THE FUTURE**

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CONTENT

SITECODE	Map Number	SITE NAME	AREA (ha)	Page
AT940001	4	Krimml Falls natural site	57.75	1
AT940002	39	Wachau	46300	4
AT940003	62	Thayathal Nationalpark	1330	9
BE940001	1	Hautes Fagnes	3988	14
BG940001	71	Central Balkan National Park	71669,5	17
BY940001	44	Berezinsky	80900	40
BY940002	48	Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park	88300	43
CH940001	8	Parc Naziunal Suizzer	16870	47
CZ940001	58	Karlštejn	1547	50
CZ940002	59	Podyjí/Thaya River Basin	6259	57
CZ940003	60	Bílé Karpaty / White Carpathians	74844	61
DE940001	26	Bayerischer Wald	13300	69
DE940002	33	Berchtesgaden	21000	72
DE940003	5	Lüneburger Heide	23400	75
DE940004	12	Siebengebirge	4200	78
DE940005	13	Südeifel, Deutsch-Luxemburgischer Naturpark	80490	81
DE940006	17	Weltenburger Enge	560	84
DE940007	10	Wollmatingerried - Untersee - Gnadensee	767	86
DE940008	31	Wurzacher Ried	1812	90
EE940001	63	Matsalu Looduskaitseala	48610	93
ES940001	25	Donaña	50720	98
ES940002	27	Ordesa y Monte Perdido	15608	101
ES940003	32	Teide	13571	104
FI940001	46	Seitsemien National Park	4170	107
FI940002	47	Ekenäs Archipelago National Park	5000	112
FR940001	2	Camargue	13117	115
FR940002	34	Les Ecrins	92000	118
FR940004	23	Scandola (Presqu'île de)	1919	121
FR940005	14	Vanoise	52839	124
FR940006	37	Mercantour (Parc National)	68500	127
FR940007	49	Port-Cros	2475	131
GR940001	18	White Mountains (Samaria)	4850	134
HU940001	42	Ipolytarnóc	512	137
HU940002	43	Szénás Hills	1182	140
HU940003	64	Tihany Peninsula	1536,33	143
IT940001	9	Abruzzo	40000	166
IT940002	30	Isola di Monte Cristo	1031	169
IT940003	24	Sasso Fratino	764	172
IT940004	35	Maremma	9800	175
IT940005	38	Alpi Marittime	28174	179
IT940006	67	Migliarino, San Rossore e Massaciuccoli Parco Regionale	23114,44	183
IT940007	68	Gran Paradiso National Park	70318	192
NL940001	11	Boschplaat	4400	204
NL940002	45	Weerribben en De Wieden	12400	207
NL940003	57	De Oostvaardersplassen	5600	210
NL940004	66	Naardermeer	1077	215
PL940001	50	Bialowieza National Park	10501.95	220
PL940002	53	Bieszczady	27064	223
PT940001	36	Ilhas Selvagens	269	228
RO940001	61	Delta Dunarii / Danube Delta	5800	231
RO940002	69	Piatra Craiului National Park	14773	240
RO940003	70	Retezat National Park	38138,5	256
RU940001	41	Teberda	84996	264
RU940002	40	Oka	21449	267
RU940003	55	Kostomuksha	4757	270
RU940004	56	Tsentralno-Chernozemny Biosphere Reserve	10280	274
SE940001	6	Muddus National Park	50350	277
SE940002	7	Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks	395400	280
SE940003	28	Store Mosse National Park	7850	283
SE940004	29	Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserve	8200	286

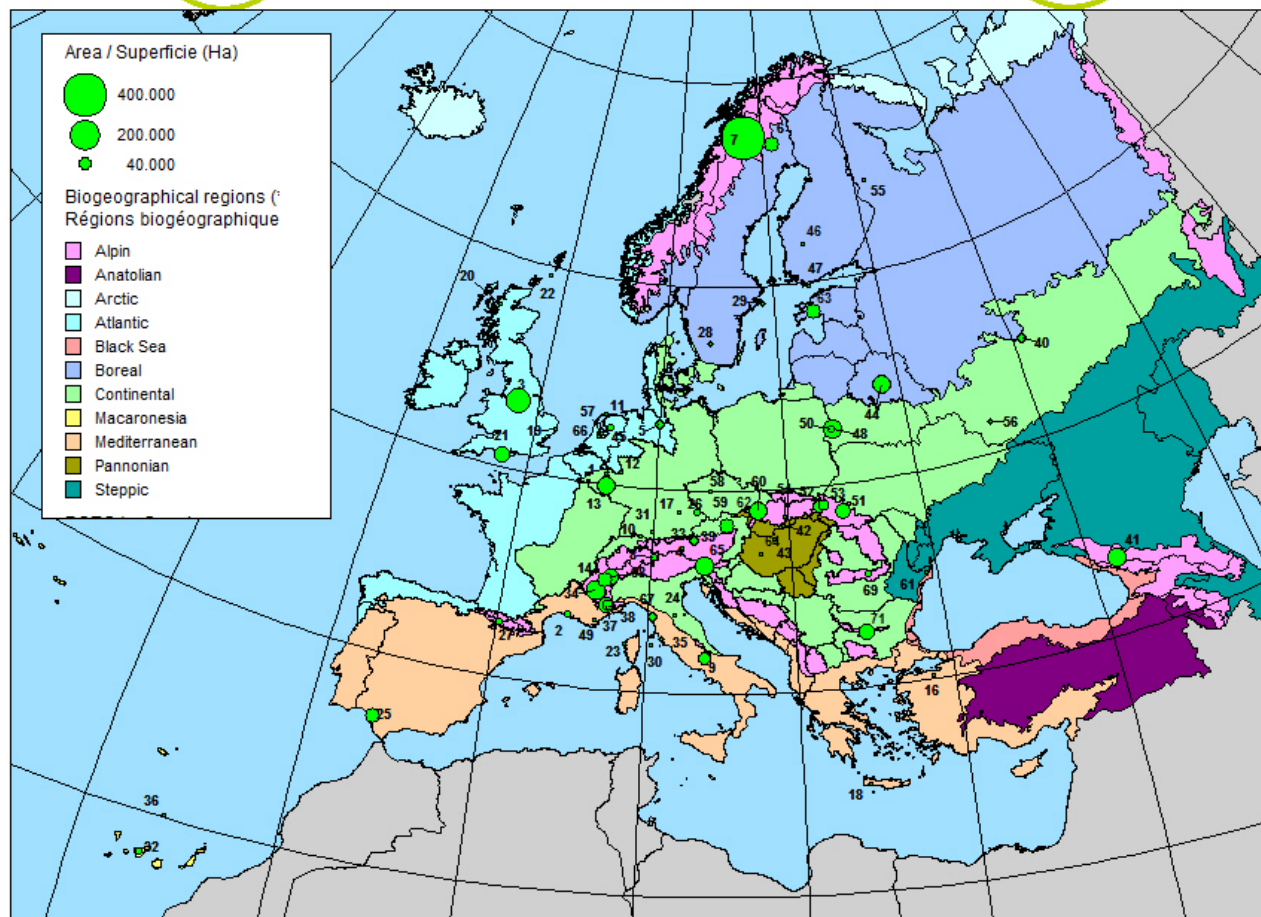
SITECODE	Map Number	SITE NAME	AREA (ha)	Page
SI940001	65	Triglavski narodni park	83807	289
SK940001	52	Východné Karpaty	40601	296
SK940002	54	Dobrocský Virgin Forest	204	300
TR940001	16	Kuşçenneti National Park	64	306
UA940001	51	Carpathian Biosphere Reserve	57880	309
UK940001	20	Beinn Eighe	4684	320
UK940002	22	Fair Isle	830	323
UK940003	19	Minsmere / Walberswick Marshes	935.3	326
UK940004	3	Peak District	140400	329
UK940005	21	Purbeck Coast	70000	332
		TOTAL:	2 190	



European Diploma of Protected Areas Diplôme Européen des espaces protégés



2011



(*) As adopted by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention / Telles qu'adoptées par le Comité permanent de la Convention de Berne.

Introduction

Since 1966, 71 areas in Europe were awarded with the European Diploma. A first publication was published in 1992. A few years later the group of specialists on protected areas of the Council of Europe expressed its wish to renew this publication. At the same time the group stressed the importance of creating a data base with the information on the European Diploma Areas. A first database and report were published in 2001. At that time, 60 sites were awarded with the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA).

This report reflects the results of an update of the database to include all recently awarded areas (up to 2011). The report represents an extract of the data base constructed specially for the European Diploma Areas.

The information used for the creation of the data base can be summarised as follows:

- the 1992 Council of Europe publication on European Diploma Areas
- the small brochures for each of the Diploma Areas published in the European Diploma Series
- the dossier sent by the member state when applying for the Diploma
- the appraisal reports of the experts
- the yearly reports for each of the Diploma Areas
- the Information Sheet for applications proved to be very efficient in standardising the information. Unfortunately, this sheet is only available for the most recent applications.

The group also indicated the importance of streamlining of information on protected areas in Europe, stressing the special role of the Standard Data Form and guidelines developed under the NATURA 2000 and Emerald sites networks. As far as possible those data standards were used for the creation of the data base of the European Diploma Areas.

As the information used is mainly in text format, most of the fields in the data base are also in text format.

In this new version the data base was extended with fields to include systematic information on Biogeographical Region, Habitats and Legal Designations. The habitats are recorded using the EUNIS habitat classification system, managed by the European Environment Agency.

The information sources used, are from different language origin. As a consequence, the data sheets are reflecting these languages which were encountered in the original documents (mainly French and English). It is hoped to homogenise this in a bi-lingual publication.

Acknowledgements

Sincere acknowledgements are going to the secretariat of the Council of Europe, responsible for the setting up of the Network of European Diploma Areas for Protected Areas and to the members of the group of specialists for their continuous interest for this project.

Biogeographical Regions

All Diploma Areas are referenced according to their location within the Biogeographical Regions (version 2010, endorsed by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, see map above)

The number of Diploma Areas per Biogeographical Region is as follows:

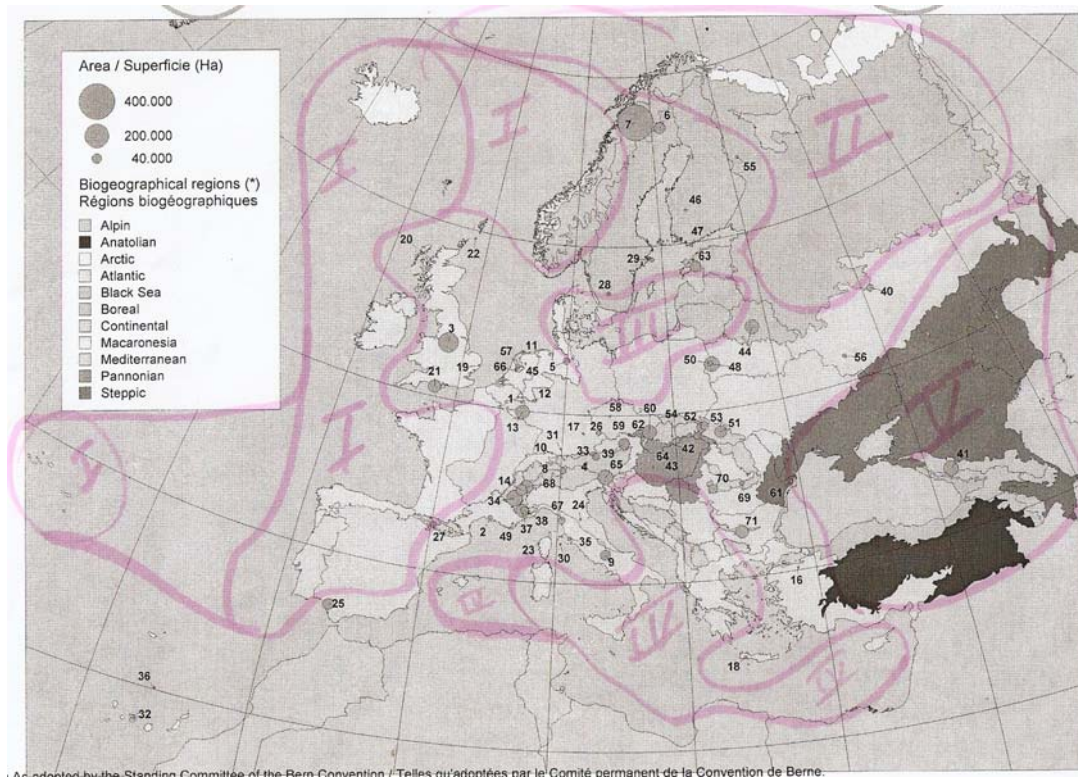
BIOGEOREG	Number of Areas
Alpine	20
Anatolian	0
Atlantic	10
Arctic	0
Black Sea	1
Boreal	9
Continental	16
Macaronesia	2
Mediterranean	9
Pannonian	3
Steppic	0

According to this map there are three Biogeographical Regions with no Diploma Area rewarded: Anatolian, Arctic and Steppic.

But even within a certain Biogeographical Region, the distribution of areas is not equally distributed. Very few or no sites are situated in the Alpine Regions of the Urals, Caucasus and West Balkan. For the Macaronesian Regions, only the Canary Islands and Ilhas Selvagens are covered. No sites are awarded in the Azores.

In general, the schematic map below indicates 5 main “gap-regions”

- I. North-, North-East- and “Mid”-Atlantic (including North Macaronesian Region)
- II. Arctic – Boreal (including Ural Alpine Region)
- III. South-Baltic basin
- IV. Mid- and East Mediterranean (including West-Balkan)
- V. Steppic – Anatolian (including Causasus Alpine Region)



Habitats within Diploma Areas

To be able to evaluate the distribution of Diploma Areas according to habitats, it was decided to record habitats using the EUNIS Habitat Classification System. (<http://eunis.eea.europa.eu/index.jsp>)

Available information in the habitat text field in the Diploma Database was used to indicate as much as possible the corresponding EUNIS habitat code. If the Diploma Area is also a NATURA2000 site, the information in the N2000 Standard Data Form was helpful to find the correct habitat code. (Natura2000 data viewer: <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/#>)

It should be stressed, that the resulting information on habitats is incomplete. It was not possible to collect information on all habitat types in all Diploma Areas. It was also very difficult to record from the information sources used, the percentage habitat coverage within the areas. This percentage is needed to estimate the distribution of the habitats in a quantitative way. It is suggested to ask the authorities, responsible for the sites, to update the information.

The tables below represent a first attempt to indicate habitat distribution within the network of Diploma Areas at the first and second level of the classification.

code	Title (Level 1)	Number of sites
A	Marine habitats	10
B	Coastal habitats	8
C	Inland surface waters	27
D	Mires, bogs and fens	28
E	Grasslands and lands dominated by forbs, mosses or lichens	38
F	Heathland, scrub and tundra	32
G	Woodland, forest and other wooded land	51
H	Inland unvegetated or sparsely vegetated habitats	24
I	Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats	3
J	Constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats	2
X	Habitat complexes (only available complexes shown)	8

Number of Sites per EUNIS level2		
code	Title (level 2)	Number of sites
A	Marine habitats	10
A1	Littoral rock and other hard substrata	2
A2	Littoral sediment	6
A3	Infralittoral rock and other hard substrata	0
A4	Circalittoral rock and other hard substrata	0
A5	Sublittoral sediment	5
A6	Deep-sea bed	0
A7	Pelagic water column	0
A8	Ice-associated marine habitats	0
B	Coastal habitats	8
B1	Coastal dunes and sandy shores	6
B2	Coastal shingle	2
B3	Rock cliffs, ledges and shores, including the supralittoral	3
C	Inland surface waters	27
C1	Surface standing waters	19
C2	Surface running waters	8
C3	Littoral zone of inland surface waterbodies	11
D	Mires, bogs and fens	28
D1	Raised and blanket bogs	11
D2	Valley mires, poor fens and transition mires	12
D3	Aapa, palsa and polygon mires	3
D4	Base-rich fens and calcareous spring mires	12
D5	Sedge and reedbeds, normally without free-standing water	7
D6	Inland saline and brackish marshes and reedbeds	0
E	Grasslands and lands dominated by forbs, mosses or lichens	38

Number of Sites per EUNIS level2		
code	Title (level 2)	Number of sites
E1	Dry grasslands	17
E2	Mesic grasslands	18
E3	Seasonally wet and wet grasslands	9
E4	Alpine and subalpine grasslands	18
E5	Woodland fringes and clearings and tall forb stands	7
E6	Inland salt steppes	2
E7	Sparsely wooded grasslands	1
F	Heathland, scrub and tundra	32
F1	Tundra	0
F2	Arctic, alpine and subalpine scrub	17
F3	Temperate and mediterranean-montane scrub	4
F4	Temperate shrub heathland	11
F5	Maquis, arborescent matorral and thermo-Mediterranean brushes	7
F6	Garrigue	0
F7	Spiny Mediterranean heaths (phrygana, hedgehog-heaths and related coastal cliff vegetation)	4
F8	Thermo-Atlantic xerophytic scrub	0
F9	Riverine and fen scrubs	9
FA	Hedgerows	0
FB	Shrub plantations	0
G	Woodland, forest and other wooded land	51
G1	Broadleaved deciduous woodland	44
G2	Broadleaved evergreen woodland	6
G3	Coniferous woodland	31
G4	Mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland	4
G5	Lines of trees, small anthropogenic woodlands, recently felled woodland, early-stage woodland and coppice	1
H	Inland unvegetated or sparsely vegetated habitats	24
H1	Terrestrial underground caves, cave systems, passages and waterbodies	9
H2	Screes	20
H3	Inland cliffs, rock pavements and outcrops	14
H4	Snow or ice-dominated habitats	6
H5	Miscellaneous inland habitats with very sparse or no vegetation	0
H6	Recent volcanic features	1
I	Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats	3
I1	Arable land and market gardens	3
I2	Cultivated areas of gardens and parks	0
J	Constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats	2
J1	Buildings of cities, towns and villages	1
J2	Low density buildings	1
J3	Extractive industrial sites	0
J4	Transport networks and other constructed hard-surfaced areas	0

Number of Sites per EUNIS level2		
code	Title (level 2)	Number of sites
J5	Highly artificial man-made waters and associated structures	1
J6	Waste deposits	1
X	Habitat complexes (only available complexes shown)	8
X01	Estuaries	2
X03	Brackish coastal lagoons	3
X04	Raised bog complexes	1
X09	Pasture woods (with a tree layer overlying pasture)	2

The EUNIS habitat classification system is divided by 10 classes at level 1 and 56 classes at level 2 (excluding the habitat complexes “X”).

The vast majority of Diploma Area consists of woodlands followed by grasslands and heathland. Marine and coastal areas are recorded in the lowest numbers, but this might be due to underestimations in the source documents used.

More detailed conclusions might be made looking at level 2, but it should be stressed again, the figures are to be considered as incomplete as the inventory is made from the available information in the information forms. A full overview can only be given if habitats are recorded for all sites at the same level, including the percentage coverage of the habitats within the Diploma Area.

Summary Conclusions and recommendations

- Although the data base is now updated, mainly for the most recent diploma areas, the older sites are in need for a substantial update. The standard information form for candidate sites was not yet used for them. It would be recommendable to either ask for a full update for all areas by sending the present forms in editable format; or to ask to update the information at the occasion of renewal of the diploma.
- For the first time, information on habitats was recorded according to the EUNIS Habitat Classification. As above, it is highly recommended to search for verification of this information and to record habitat % coverage within the diploma areas.
- No site boundaries in GIS are available at the secretariat. Nevertheless, for most areas, this type of information exist at local or regional level. It is recommended to collect site boundaries in a systematic way.
- The main gaps in the geographical distribution were identified; 5 main “gap-regions” were identified. The process of stimulating governments to send in candidate areas in those regions should be intensified.