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AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF SPECIALISTS -EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS
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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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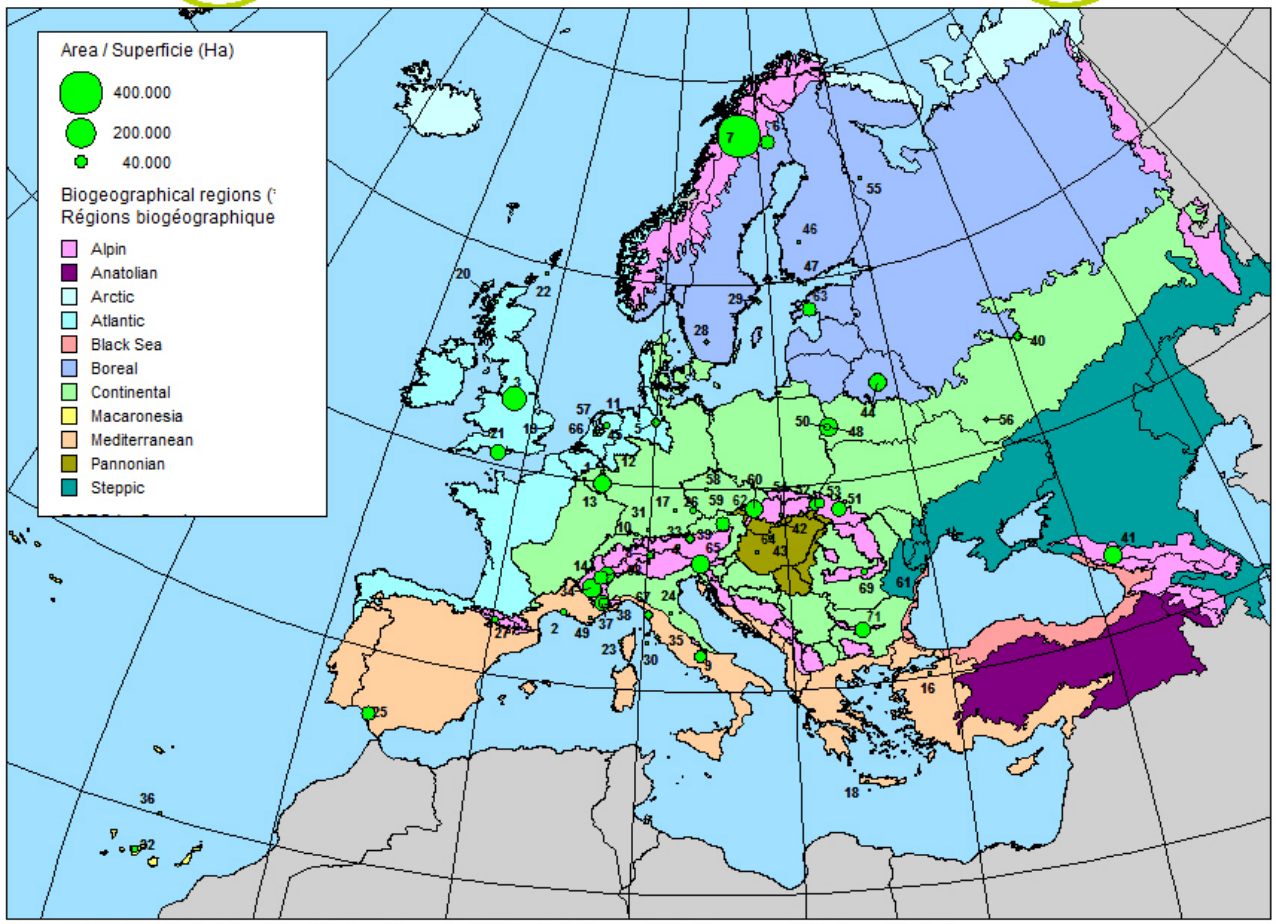
European Diploma of Protected Areas
Diplôme Européen des espaces protégés

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:

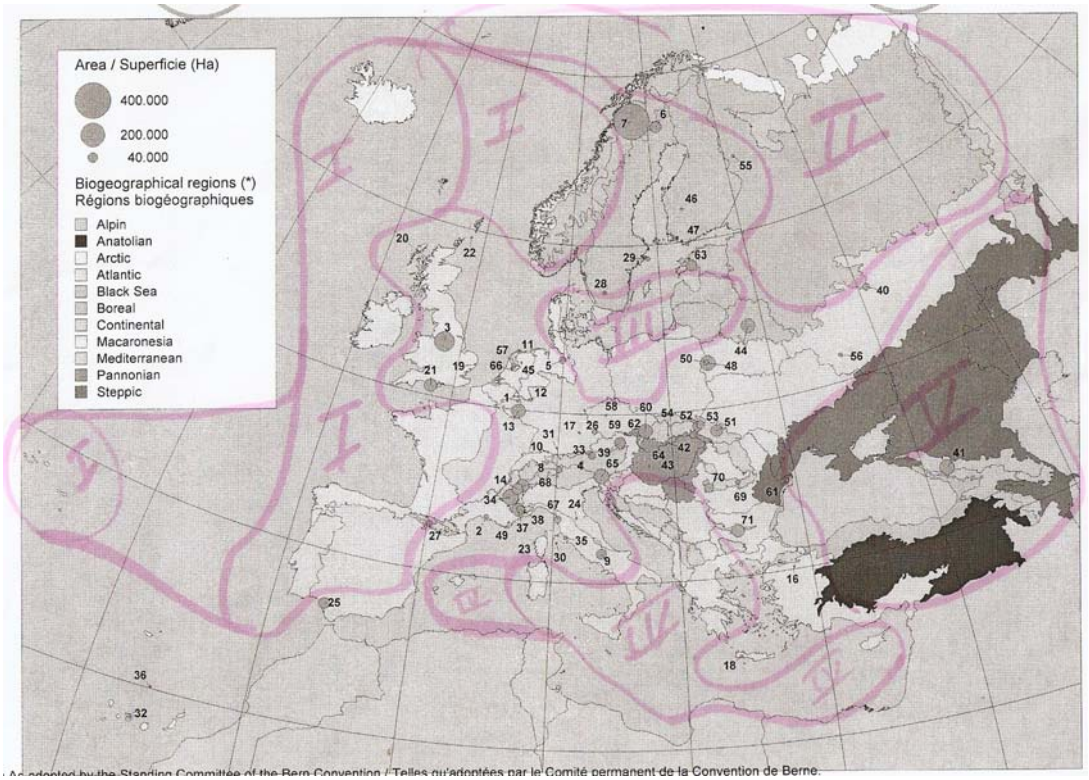
BIOGEOREG	Number of Areas
Alpine	20
Anatolian	0
Atlantic	10
Arctic	0
Black Sea	1
Boreal	9
Continental	16
Macaronesia	2
Mediterranean	9
Pannonian	3
Steppic	0

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.