CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Ad-Hoc Restricted Group of Experts on
Reporting on the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest

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Process and timeline for a regular update of the national Emerald databases:
background and discussion document

Document prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Governance

BACKGROUND

The Emerald Network biogeographical evaluation process started in 2011, with a first ever evaluation Seminar organised on 2-4 November 2011 in Bar (Montenegro). Several Emerald biogeographical evaluation Seminars took place since that date. These concerned all but 2 Contracting Parties and Observer States considered to be working on the establishment of the Emerald Network. These countries are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Table 1: Overview of the Emerald Network Evaluation Seminars organised by September 2016

Year	Venue	Countries concerned	Biogeographical regions concerned	Species and habitats covered
2011	Bar (Montenegro)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, "the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia	MED, ALP, CON, PAN	All
2012	Basel (Switzerland)	Switzerland	ALP, CON	All
2013	Trondheim (Norway)	Norway	ARC, ALP, ATL, BOR	All
2015	Tbilisi (Georgia)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia	STE, ALP-Caucasus, ANA	All (except birds)
2015	Petrozavodsk (the Russian Federation)	Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine	ARC, BOR, ALP-Ural	All (except birds)
2015	Minsk (Belarus)	Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine	n/a	Birds
2016	Chisinau (Republic of Moldova	Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine	CON, ALP-Car, PAN	All (except birds)
2016	Trondheim (Norway)	Norway	ARC, ALP, ATL, BOR	All
2016	Kiev (Ukraine)	Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine	STE, ALP-Caucasus, BLS	All (except birds)
2016	Tbilisi (Georgia)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia	n/a	Birds

So far, any submission of an updated national Emerald database by the Contracting Parties and Observer States concerned has been triggered by two main reasons: 1) contractual obligations with the Council of Europe or 2) the willingness of a given country to show progress and engage a political process at national level on the sites designation.

Neither the legislative framework of the Emerald Network nor a decision by the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks foresee an annual deadline for the submission of updated national databases by the national authorities of the countries concerned.

The lack of a clear annual deadline has several drawbacks:

- Leaves national authorities with the feeling of "finished job" after the end of a biogeographical evaluation Seminar;

- Raises questions regarding the progress of the process at national level;
- Prevents the informed review of implementation of the Emerald Network Calendar 2011-2020;
- Leaves room for non-expected requests for the organisation of new biogeographical evaluation rounds;
- Prevents a good planning of the Convention activities and Programme of Work.

PROPOSAL BY THE SECRETARIAT OF THE BERN CONVENTION

The Secretariat of the Bern Convention proposes the adoption of a deadline for the annual submission of updated databases by the countries performing the Emerald Network. Taking into account the timing of the annual meetings of the Bern Convention decision-making body (the Standing Committee) which meets end of November/beginning of December, the most suitable period for the reception of the updated national databases is the beginning of each calendar year.

It is proposed that the **31st of January of each year is fixed as deadline**.

The rationale behind this proposal is:

- It will allow for a QA/QC check of the national database by the Secretariat and eventual corrections to be requested to the authorities during the year;
- It will allow for any newly proposed Emerald sites to be submitted for nomination as candidate Emerald sites to the Standing Committee of the same year.