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AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**MID-TERM REVIEW OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
EMERALD NETWORK CALENDAR (2011-2020)**

(FINAL VERSION)

*Document prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*

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INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention committed to the long-term process of establishing the Emerald Network, an ecological network made up of areas of particular importance for the conservation of European species and habitats. Its implementation was launched by the Council of Europe as one of the main tools for the Parties to comply with the obligations set under Article 4 of the Convention. The Network is however also open to Observer states to the Convention.

On 9 December 2010 the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention adopted an ambitious [Calendar for the implementation of its Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest \(ASCIs\)](#). The Calendar covers a ten-year period (2011-2020) and aims at a full operational launch of the Network by 2020. It sets milestones and objectives for each Contracting Party and Observer State to the Bern Convention concerned by the setting-up of the Network. The Calendar further sets indicators for the strategic development of the Emerald Network, in particular its practical tools and legal framework.

The Emerald Network Calendar was adopted a month after the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya (Japan). In October 2010, world nations committed to a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the so-called Aichi Biodiversity Targets for the period 2011-2020. This Plan provides an overarching framework on biodiversity, which Parties to the CBD and other partners engaged in biodiversity management and policy development¹ should implement. The Emerald Calendar 2011-2020 is thus aimed at contributing to the achievement of some of the most important world biodiversity targets agreed in Nagoya, in particular the Aichi Target 11 on protected areas².

The present report reviews progress achieved by Contracting Parties and Observer States to the Bern Convention after the first five years of implementation of the Emerald Network Calendar 2011-2020. It equally includes an assessment of progress achieved on the strategic development of the Emerald Network, implemented by the Secretariat of the Convention under the supervision of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks.

This analysis represents a first mid-term review of accomplishments and is aimed at informing on the state of play of the Network implementation. An executive summary of the main findings of the report is included in the last chapter. It is aimed at both biodiversity policy officers and higher level officials at the competent Ministries at national level. It proposes some recommendations to Contracting Parties and Observer States for stepping-up efforts at national level for reaching their commitments towards the Bern Convention and its Emerald Network.

1. REINFORCING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EMERALD NETWORK

1.1. The need for clarifying the Emerald Network requirements

The legal framework of the Emerald Network was developed in the mid '90. In 1998, the first rules of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs)³ are adopted. One should also mention the adoption of the lists of habitats and species of European importance to be protected through a network of sites, respectively [Resolution No. 4 \(1996\)](#) and [Resolution No. 6 \(1998\)](#) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.

¹ See: <http://www.cbd.int/sp/>

² By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.

³ Resolution No. 5 (1998) concerning the rules for the Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (Emerald Network), adopted by the Standing Committee on 4 December 1998.

During the '90 and early years 2000 a number of Contracting Parties have developed their own network of protected areas, further to the adoption and transposition at national level of the EU Habitats Directive in 1992 (and the Birds Directive in 1979). The EU Habitats Directive was adopted in response to the legal obligations of the European Union towards the Bern Convention, to which the Union is a Contracting Party. As a binding legal text, this Directive created stronger legal requirements for EU Member States, subject to sanctions if not timely transposed into national legislation and implemented.

Other Contracting Parties, not members of the EU, started implementing the Emerald Network on their territories with the support of the Secretariat of the Bern Convention. This implementation took the form of an ambitious programme of pilot Emerald Network projects in the late '90 and early 2000.

After more than a decade of practical implementation at national level it became clear that there is a need to further clarify the legal requirements the Network creates for Parties. More importantly, when adopting the Emerald Network Calendar in 2010, the Standing Committee to the Convention stressed the importance of ensuring the implementation of a coherent and fully compatible Network of high biodiversity areas throughout the European continent.

1.2. Updating the lists of species and habitats targeted by the Emerald Network

In response to this requirement and to the strategic development issues included in the Emerald Calendar, the Secretariat to the Bern Convention worked in cooperation with its main technical and scientific partners, the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity and the European Environment Agency. The main objective was ensuring a complete coordination of approaches and mechanisms between the Emerald and the Natura 2000 Networks.

Since 2011, the Secretariat undertook a vast harmonisation exercise, aiming to harmonise the lists of species and habitats of the Birds and Habitats Directives in the EU and those of the Emerald Network in Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998) of the Bern Convention.

In 2012, this exercise resulted in the revision of the list of species annexed to Resolution No. 6 (1998), which was enlarged to include new species only present in the Directives at that time. The differences could be explained by the additions made to the lists of the EU Habitats and Birds directives resulting from the consecutive EU enlargements. These enlargements were subsequent to the adoption of the Bern Convention Resolutions.

In 2014, after a three-year long debate and in depth analysis, the list of habitats requiring special conservation of Resolution No. 4 (1996) was equally updated. The revised list is now using the EUNIS habitats classification developed and supported by the European Environment Agency and includes all habitat types present in the Habitats Directive but previously missing from the Resolution. Again this difference can be explained by the additions to the Directives further to the consecutive EU enlargements. One should however point that three new habitat types, proposed by Ukraine and Switzerland, were also added to Resolution No. 4 (1996). Thus the list of targeted habitats protected under the Emerald Network is now larger than the one of the EU Habitats Directive.

1.3. Strengthening the legal requirements of the Emerald Network

In 2010, after nearly 10 years of discussions, the Standing Committee to the Convention adopted the [Criteria for the biogeographical assessment of the national lists of proposed Emerald sites](#). Before being officially adopted as Emerald sites, all sites proposed to join the Network should be thoroughly assessed at biogeographical level, according to scientifically robust criteria elaborated together with the European Environment Agency and is European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, in view of checking their sufficiency to achieve the ultimate objective of the Network. This objective is the long term survival of the species and habitats listed under Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998) adopted by the Standing Committee and requiring specific protection measures.

In light of the Emerald/Natura 2000 harmonisation process, a certain number of additional criteria concerning the evaluation of the proposed Emerald sites for naturally occurring bird species

and for regularly occurring migratory birds were adopted in 2013. These have completed the Evaluation Criteria adopted back in 2010. These additional criteria will in particular help protect many rare and threatened bird species from Central and Eastern Europe. The adoption of this text is an important milestone as it paved the way for the initiation of the new phase of evaluation of the Network, after several years of practical work on the identification of Areas of Special Conservation Interest at national level.

The Criteria for the biogeographical assessment of proposed Emerald sites further established the status of **candidate Emerald site**. All sites proposed for joining the Network can receive this status, even before their biogeographical evaluation actually starts. In order to clarify this status, in 2011 the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention adopted [Recommendation No. 157 \(2011\) on the status of candidate Emerald sites and guidance on the criteria for their nomination](#). The Recommendation calls on Contracting Parties to take the necessary measures for the conservation of the ecological characteristics of the candidate Emerald sites, even before they are officially adopted as Emerald sites by the Standing Committee to the Convention.

In 2012, the Standing Committee adopted [Resolution No. 8 \(2012\) on the national designation of adopted Emerald sites and on the implementation of management measures, monitoring and reporting](#). According to this Resolution, Parties should designate, through legislative or other measures, the sites on their territories which have been officially adopted as Emerald sites by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention. This designation should ensure areas benefit from a suitable protection from external threats and an appropriate management guaranteeing the long term survival of the species and habitats for which the site was adopted. Management plans are one of the most suitable means for achieving these objectives, but any other administrative or contractual measure can be envisaged. As a consequence, management guidelines for Emerald sites are currently being developed in cooperation with the concerned Contracting Parties. Issues such as climate change adaptation and mitigation and prevention and management of invasive alien species are taken into account in this work.

Resolution No. 8 (2012) further foresees Contracting Parties have to report on progress achieved in the implementation of the Emerald Network every six years from the adoption of the Resolution. The Secretariat of the Bern Convention, in cooperation with the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Network of the Convention, is currently preparing a first reporting format for this exercise. The objective is to facilitate reporting by countries through an on-line reporting system and to enable a Europe wide comparison of conservation statuses of the species and habitats targeted by the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks.

2. UPDATING THE EMERALD NETWORK TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES

The first set of rules for the Emerald Network is adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in 1998. This is also the year where the Emerald Standard Data Form (SDF), to be filled in for each area joining the Network, is adopted. Since that date, very little progress was achieved on improving and modernising the implementation methodology of the Network and its practical tools. Conscious of the need to modernise and computerise these tools, the Standing Committee decided to include such a strategic development objective in the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020.

Again in light of the Emerald/Natura 2000 harmonisation process, a [new Emerald Standard Data Form](#) was adopted by the Standing Committee in 2013. The Standard Data Form is the same as the one used by EU Member States for the Natura 2000 Network.

This adoption paved the way for a yearlong hard work on the adaptation of the Natura 2000 Software for the needs of the Emerald Network. A [new Emerald Network Software](#) was launched in September 2014, as a result of the successful year long cooperation between the European Environment Agency, the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, independent consultants and some Bern Convention Contracting Parties which volunteered for testing the product.

The New Software and SDF are already in use by many Eastern European and South Caucasus countries. The adaptation to these new tools was very smooth. Sharing the same SDF and Software

for the Natura 2000 and the Emerald Networks would strongly facilitate future work of some Contracting Parties which are currently candidate countries for EU accession. If and when these Contracting Parties become EU member states, the transition between both Networks will be simplified. This is particularly valid for countries from South East Europe and the Balkans.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE OF THE CURRENT EMERALD NETWORK

The Emerald Network is to be set up in all Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention. Its voluntary implementation is equally open to and encouraged for Observer States and any other State interested to join the initiative. However, the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020 targets only part of the Contracting Parties and Observer States to the Bern Convention, excluding those who have already implemented the EU Natura 2000 Network.

Since the late '90, a vast programme of pilot projects initiated the practical implementation of the Emerald Network and benefitted nearly all Contracting Parties to the Convention. This includes Parties which, after their accession to the European Union, have set-up the EU Natura 2000 Network under EU Birds and Habitats Directives on their territories. These countries⁴ have benefited from the experience and the knowledge acquired through the Emerald Network constitution phase, as well as could use the data collected under the Emerald projects for their work under Natura 2000. This was notably facilitated thanks to the full harmonisation of the two networks in the past years (see Chapters 1 and 2 above).

In the mid '90, an agreement was reached at the level of the Standing Committee recognising the Natura 2000 sites in EU member States as covering the requirements of the Emerald Network. In 2015, the EU Natura 2000 Network for terrestrial land is considered as almost complete and currently efforts are deployed for its implementation in the marine environment.

When it comes to the Emerald Network practical setting-up, since the years 2010, it is actively implemented by fifteen Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention. The countries concerned are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Georgia, Iceland, Morocco, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

The Russian Federation is the only Observer state currently working on the Emerald Network implementation. For the moment, the Network is put in place only in the European part of the Russian Federation. Recently, the implementation of the Emerald Network on a voluntary basis even acted as a trigger for attracting a previous Observer State to join the Convention as a full Party in 2013.

These sixteen European countries are the main current implementers of the Emerald Network, although other Contracting Parties are also mentioned in the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020 and will be analysed in the following parts of the report below.

4. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMERALD NETWORK IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

Five EU candidate and potential candidate countries, **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”** are equally Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention. According to the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020, the five countries were required to submit their final lists of Emerald candidate sites to the Standing Committee for possible adoption by 2014-2015.

In the period 2005-2010, the five West Balkan countries finalised Phase I of the Emerald Network constitution process. This consisted in the assessment of the country's natural resources, the identification of the species and habitats to be protected, and the delivery of a complete database

⁴ Croatia, the youngest EU Member State, benefitted from its work on the Emerald Network before submitting almost the same areas for joining the EU Natura 2000 Network.

containing scientific data on the potential Emerald sites on their territory. This work was achieved with the financial support and coordination of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

In 2011, Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process was launched by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity. Through a scientific evaluation Seminar, countries received feedback on the work carried out up to 2011, and valuable guidance on areas on which they should focus their future action, so to ensure the sufficiency of their respective national ASCI proposals. Kosovo* nature conservation specialists also joined as observers. All proposed Emerald sites on the territories of these five countries received the status of candidate Emerald sites in 2012 (see Table 1 below) and the provisions of Recommendation No. 157 (2011) apply to them.

Since this first Emerald evaluation round organised for these five countries, only scarce information was received by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention on further steps undertaken by the national authorities for completing the Emerald Network on their territories. Developments can thus be assessed as insufficient to comply with the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020 objectives. The main reason for the slow progress since 2011 appears to be the insufficient financial and human resources these countries hold for activities in the nature conservation field.

Table 1: Candidate Emerald sites in the West Balkan region

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF CANDIDATE EMERALD SITES	TOTAL COVERAGE (KM ²)
ALBANIA	25	5224,30
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	29	2504,55
“THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”	35	7543,83
MONTENEGRO	32	2400,77
SERBIA	61	10210,78

Regarding **Turkey**, the country benefited from the implementation of a pilot Emerald project on its territory in the early 2000, financed by the Council of Europe. Since the implementation of this project, contacts with the responsible person in the competent Ministry in the country were lost. No further information was received by the Secretariat on work achieved at national level on the Emerald Network implementation.

The most recent informal information received suggests that Turkey, as an EU candidate country, has initiated the implementation of a project on the setting-up of the Natura 2000 Network on its territory. The result of the Natura 2000 project could be used by the country for submitting a complete Emerald database to the Secretariat of the Convention and thus comply with the milestones set for Turkey in the Emerald Calendar 2011-20220.

5. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMERALD NETWORK IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Since 2009 and with the financial support of the European Union and the Council of Europe, the Secretariat of the Bern Convention implements a long-term project aimed at the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Eastern and Central Europe and the South Caucasus. Seven countries, **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine** are targeted.

The objectives set for these seven countries in the frame of the joint European Union/Council of Europe project follow closely the milestones from the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020. Thus these

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

countries are equally the best advanced in the implementation of the Network on their territories. The financial support and coordination and guidance they receive from the Secretariat of the Convention strongly supports progress in the achievement of their objectives.

Every year since the adoption of the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020, the seven countries submitted new databases with additional Emerald site proposals. From a quantitative point of view, clear progress was achieved in the last 5 years, with a significant numerical increase in the number of sites between 2012 and 2015. Table 2 below illustrates this quantitative progress.

Most importantly, this numerical rise in the number of sites further indicates that the six Contracting Parties and one Observer state and their competent authorities have understood the Emerald Network mechanisms and criteria. They have understood in particular the need to further identify smaller additional sites at national level and go beyond the nationally protected areas systems. This is very important for ensuring a good geographical coverage of the national territories, which is at the basis of the completeness and coherence criteria of the Emerald network.

Table 2: Number of proposed Emerald sites and total area covered by January 2015

COUNTRY	END 2012		JANUARY 2014		JANUARY 2015		
	SITES	% COUNTRY COVERAGE	SITES	% COUNTRY COVERAGE	SITES	AREA COVERED (KM ²)	% COUNTRY COVERAGE
ARMENIA	9	7,68	13	9,88	14	3469,50	11,56
AZERBAIJAN	10	11,46	12	9,72	14	8527,38	9,80
BELARUS	12	4,39	16	4,71	64	18971,23	9,12
GEORGIA	20	8,42	21	13,20	34	14219,82	20,40
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	17	12,24	18	11,53	26	3955,14	11,74
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	740	7,13	923	8,0	1267	479199,86	+/-12,30
UKRAINE	151	7,20	159	7,4	169	46494,66	7,70
	959	AVERAGE: 7,15%	1162	AVERAGE: 9,2%	1588	574837,59	AVERAGE: 11,8%

As foreseen in the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020, after a first phase dedicated to the identification of areas suitable to join the network on their territories, the seven countries are currently subject of an evaluation of their site proposals. The period 2015-2016 will be dedicated to this evaluation exercise, through a series of evaluation Seminars, following the milestones of the Calendar.

A first evaluation Seminar was organised for three countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) from the South Caucasus out of the seven discussed here. The event took place in May 2015 and the final results indicate that all three countries have effectively progressed in ensuring the completeness of the Emerald Network on their territories. The first analysis of the sufficiency evaluation indicates that their current Emerald Network sites are sufficient for ensuring the long-term survival of 35.5 % of protected animal species in Armenia, 58% in Azerbaijan and 46.7% in Georgia. Armenia is best performing with its Emerald Network sites being sufficient for 57.1% of the protected plants species, while this percentage reaches 45.8% in Azerbaijan and 39.3% in Georgia. For habitats, all countries have similar performances. Countries have received an important homework after this first Evaluation Seminar, indicating the animal and plant species and habitats to which they should pay a particular attention in the coming 2 years and select additional sites for their full protection.

6. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMERALD NETWORK IN ICELAND, NORWAY AND SWITZERLAND

These three countries do not form a coherent geographical region. Nevertheless, all three countries are Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention and objectives for the implementation of the Emerald Network on their territories are included in the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020. In addition,

they are considered together here are not concerned by EU Natural 2000 Network and represent what we could call a “white spot” within Western Europe, where this Network is implemented.

In 2011 **Iceland** initiated the implementation of a large scale project, financed by EU pre-accession funds and supporting the implementation of the Natura 2000 Network on its territory. However, the prospects of an EU accession for the country have changed in the past year and the country is now considering submitting to the Bern Convention the list of potential sites it has identified for the Natura 2000 network. According to their national internal calendar, their first list of potential Emerald sites could be submitted in 2016. Such a delivery would come with a slight delay according to the initial milestones set for Iceland in the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020. It will however allow for the organisation of a first Emerald biogeographical evaluation Seminar for Iceland in 2016-2017, as foreseen in the Calendar.

In 2011, a first Emerald biogeographical evaluation Seminar was organised for **Switzerland** as planned for in the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020. As a follow-up to this evaluation, in December 2012, for the first time since the activities towards the setting up of the Network started, the Standing Committee to the Convention officially adopted 37 areas in Switzerland as the first real Emerald sites. According to the recent information received by the Secretariat, since the first evaluation of their Network, the national authorities in Switzerland proceeded to an additional self-evaluation of their national resources and have considered some possible additional areas suitable for the Network. Switzerland is now working on the description of these additional areas using the Emerald tools, a necessary step for the completion and ecological connectivity and coherence of the Network.

Norway is one of the countries closely following its objectives and milestones for the implementation of the Emerald Network from the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020. Successful initial work on the identification of areas on its territory suitable for joining the network took place in the period 2011-2013. A first Emerald biogeographical evaluation Seminar was organised for Norway as planned in the Emerald Calendar. This evaluation Seminar facilitated the nomination of the 633 sites first proposed by the country as candidate Emerald sites (see table 3 below). As indicated for the countries from the West Balkans region, these sites are now subject to the provisions of Recommendation No. 157 (2011) of the Standing Committee.

According to the national authorities in Norway, the results of this evaluation are currently studied by the national authorities and additional areas are identified for completing the Network sufficiency. The country is planning to submit a new set of Emerald database by the end of 2015, containing the ecological data of newly identified Emerald sites in Norway. Following the Calendar, a new Emerald evaluation round will take place for Norway in the period 2016-2017.

Table 3: Number of proposed and officially nominated candidate Emerald sites in Norway

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PROPOSED AND CANDIDATE EMERALD SITES	TOTAL COVERAGE (KM ²)
NORWAY	711	52418,11

7. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMERALD NETWORK IN NORTH AFRICA

Morocco is the first African state and Contracting Party to the Bern Convention to benefit from the implementation of a dedicated Emerald Network pilot project on its territory. This successful project was finalised in 2010 and resulted in the identification of what is considered to represent around 10% of all potential Emerald sites on the territory of that country (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Number of candidate Emerald sites in Morocco

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF CANDIDATE EMERALD SITES	TOTAL COVERAGE (KM ²)
MOROCCO	11	5728,20

After a period of three years, Morocco is expected to start working on transferring the existing Emerald database to the new Emerald Standard Data Form and Software in 2015, but also on identifying new potential Emerald sites on the national territory. The initiation of this work comes with delay regarding the milestone set for Morocco in the Emerald Calendar, but progress will hopefully be significant enough for allowing the initialisation of the Emerald evaluation process for this country by 2016, as foreseen in the Calendar.

Burkina Faso and **Tunisia** are both Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention and the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020 includes objectives regarding the setting-up of the Network on their territories. Burkina Faso benefited from an initial pilot Emerald project in the early 2000, but since then did not indicate any willingness to continue working on the Network setting-up nor provided any information on activities set up at national level in this direction. Tunisia, on the contrary, expressed its readiness to start implementing the Network but requested the financial assistance of the Convention. Such a financial opportunity hasn't been found yet and the national authorities of the country have not reported on any nationally initiated progress in the field.

8. OVERALL PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMERALD CALENDAR 2011-2020

The aggregated figures presented in this report clearly show important progress achieved in the past 5 years. Officially **13 Contracting Parties and 1 Observer State to the Bern Convention have seen their proposed Emerald sites nominated as candidate sites. One Contracting Party was the first one to see sites on its territory adopted as full Emerald sites.**

Overall, by June 2015, the Emerald Network (newly proposed Emerald sites, candidate Emerald sites and adopted Emerald sites) represents nearly 600 000 km² and 3000 sites. To illustrate these figures, one could stress that the current Emerald Network already covers half of the territory covered by the EU Natura 2000 Network.

These figures should however be used with caution, taking into account that they are only preliminary. The Emerald Network is still in its establishment phase and no real management measures are yet implemented in the Emerald Network sites, unless these already benefit from some protection at national level. In addition, the number of newly nominated candidate Emerald sites raises each year. New proposals are presented for nomination annually at the meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, taking place at the end of each year. Unfortunately, no further sites have been proposed for official nomination as Emerald sites yet, but countries like Norway, Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia might be the next ones to agree to this next step, already at the end of 2015.

On a more negative note, one should stress that progress revealed to be slow in many of the countries. Very few countries have dedicated sufficient human and financial resources to the Emerald Network implementation. This is the case for Switzerland and Norway which have been progressing well in their work for the past few years. When financial support is provided by the Bern Convention or its partners, progress reveals steady and timely, closely following the milestones set on the Emerald Calendar. Countries from Eastern and Central Europe have this privilege, while Morocco will be the first African state to benefit from financial and capacity building assistance for the setting-up of the network since the adoption of the Emerald Calendar.

Geographically, the implementation of the Emerald Network is essentially taking place in Contracting Parties to the Convention and only one Observer state implements it on a voluntary basis. All other countries from Central Asia, included in the Calendar because of their political involvement in the "Environment for Europe" process and the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological network, have not expressed an interest in the Emerald process.

9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The adoption of the Emerald Network Calendar 2011-2020 acted as a catalyst for strengthened commitment and reinforced action by national authorities in the Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, but also its Observer States. Adopting the Emerald Calendar in the aftermath of the agreement on the world Aichi biodiversity Targets 2020 in the frame of the UN CBD triggered sustained commitment from national authorities in the countries concerned. For Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, the Emerald Network is a practical tool for implementing the UN Aichi Targets on protected areas on their territories.

The Emerald Calendar 2011-2020 has set many ambitious objectives and milestones for the 10 year period, ultimately aiming at an operational launch of the Emerald Network by 2020. Mid-term through its implementation overall progress is positive, with **3000 Emerald sites⁶ covering nearly 600 000 km²**. However, a thorough analysis of progress achieved by individual countries in the implementation of the Emerald Network Calendar 2011-2020 shows a clearly contrasted picture between different countries.

Progress varies greatly between different Contracting Parties and Observer States active in the Network setting-up. Some countries have firmly paved the way for the achievement of their own milestones from the Calendar, with continuous efforts in the past five years which already give results. Their work helped increase both the overall level of achievements of the Emerald Calendar implementation and the aggregated figures of the Emerald Network.

On the contrary, there are still other Parties to the Convention which have not yet proposed any Emerald site on their territory. In addition, many countries from Central Asia invited to work on the Emerald Network setting-up and included in the Emerald Network Calendar 2011-2020 have not shown any interest in contributing to this endeavour.

Taking into account the mid-term review of implementation of the Emerald Network Calendar 2011-2020, the following recommendations are addressed to the competent national authorities of all Contracting Parties, Observer States and other interested countries:

- Mobilise financial resources at national level, both internal or external, for supporting action on the implementation of the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020;
- Mobilise human resources at national level for supporting the work on the implementation of the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020;
- Seek advice from the Secretariat of the Bern Convention when needed, both on issues linked to the constitution process of the Network and the resource mobilisation process before external donors;
- Reinforce cooperation with civil society sector, in particular nature conservation NGOs and secotr in general which often have robust and updated ecological data available, with can be used for starting operations on the Emerald Network setting-up;
- Reinforce coherence between any action implemented at national level on the setting-up of the Natura 2000 Network and work on the establishment of the Emerald Network;
- Act towards increasing the visibility of the Emerald network, its objectives and long-term benefits at national level, both to the general public and political decision-makers.

The following recommendations are addressed to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention:

- Continue supporting the efforts and work by Contracting Parties and Observer States, currently active on the Network setting-up;

⁶ Newly proposed Emerald sites, already nominated candidate Emerald sites and adopted Emerald sites; figures by June 2015.

- Continue providing technical and organisation support when needed and requested by Contracting Parties, Observer States and other interested countries;
- Increase the visibility of the Emerald Network at all levels and in particular among the main actors and stakeholders in its future management;
- Seek opportunities for the mobilisation of additional financial resources aimed at supporting action on the implementation of the Emerald Calendar 2011-2020.