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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL
HABITATS

Standing Committee

35th meeting
Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUP OF SPECIALISTS ON THE
EUROPEAN DIPLOMA FOR PROTECTED AREAS**

*Document prepared by the
Democratic Governance Directorate*

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Report of the meeting

The Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas met in Strasbourg on 13 March 2015. The Standing Committee/Bureau is invited to:

- Take note of the meeting report of the Group of Specialists;
- Consider, in view of forwarding them to the Committee of Ministers before the 1 September 2015 for examination and possible adoption, the draft Resolutions (Appendix III) on:
 - the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Vashlovani Protected Areas (Georgia),
 - the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the National Park Weerribben-Wieden (Netherlands);
- Take note of the Opinions of the Group of Specialists, following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to:
 - Podyji National Park (Czech republic) and Thayatal National Park (Austria),
 - Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany),

and consider the appended draft Resolutions to be possibly proposed to the Committee of Ministers for examination and possible adoption (Appendix IV);

- Consider the draft Resolution proposing the withdrawal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to Poloniny National Park (Slovak Republic), and (for information) the Opinion adopted in 2013 by the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas (Appendix V).

1. Welcome and opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened on Monday 13 March 2015 by the Chair, Mr Peter Skoberne (Slovenia), and by Mr Øystein Størkersen (Norway), Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.

The Chair welcomed the members of the Group, the experts, the representatives of the areas and the members of the Secretariat. More particularly, the Chair welcomed the new member from Turkey who replaced Ms Burcu Bursali, and thanked Ms Bursali for her work. In addition, the Chair greeted the presence at the meeting of two former Chairs of the Group and of the Chair of the Standing Committee. The list of participants is available in Appendix I.

The Chair of the Standing Committee congratulated the members of the Group and the representatives of the Diploma areas for having established one of the first networks of important natural sites in the world. He highlighted the need for international collaboration and the importance of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to protect the biodiversity and also to conserve the sites for the benefit of mankind and other living creatures. He eventually encouraged the members of the Group and the managers of the Diploma areas to use the Bern Convention whenever they need assistance in their endeavour.

2. Adoption of the draft agenda

Relevant document: T-PVS/DE (2015) 1

The Group adopted the draft agenda, as set out in Appendix II.

3. General information on activities of the Bern Convention relevant for the work of the Group

The Secretariat provided information on the various meetings taking place in the frame of the Bern Convention and its Groups of Experts, detailing the topics dealt with. The calendar of activities can be consulted at the address: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/calendar2015_EN.asp

Mr Eladio Fernandez-Galiano, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department, greeted all participants and thanked them in advance for participating in the ceremony of the 50th anniversary of the European Diploma, taking place during the lunch break of the meeting. He then briefly presented the main developments with regards to the invasive alien species.

4. Short presentation by the Chair of the minutes of the meeting of the Group in 2014 and of activities undertaken during the last year

Relevant document: T-PVS/DE (2014) 11

The Chair briefly described the outcomes of the work of the Group during 2014 and recalled the discussions held on the various Diploma areas, more specifically on those in need of particular attention. The Chair mentioned the European Diploma awarded to the Desertas Nature Reserve (Portugal) and the update of the model plan for annual reports. He also mentioned the discussion around the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the European Diploma and the proposals by the Group, which become concrete in 2015.

5. Application for the award of the European Diploma: results of the on-the-spot appraisal, discussion and proposals to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

▪ Vashlovani Protected Areas (Georgia)

Relevant documents: T-PVS/DE (2014) 8; T-PVS/DE (2015) 2; Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 5

The expert, Mr Hervé Lethier (Switzerland), presented the findings of his visit to the Vashlovani Protected Areas (VPAs), introduced each of the five clusters/areas which compose the VPAs and underlined that they all have the same administration. He highlighted that the VPAs are a mix of steppes, meadows, arid and grove forests, hemi xerophyllous communities and desert ecosystems. Many flora species are endemic, endangered or threatened and several are listed in the Red data book of Georgia and the IUCN Red List. Just few species however are listed on the Annexes to the Bern Convention.

According to the expert, this should not be interpreted as a lack of rare, endangered or endemic species of European importance within the nominated area, but as a need to review the annexes to the Bern Convention so as to make them as accurate and representative as possible of that part of the Pan-European biodiversity. The nominated area also hosts very rare and important fauna species for Europe. In addition, the expert mentioned that the Vashlovani Protected Areas have already been officially nominated as candidate Emerald sites by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.

Mr Lethier concluded that the VPAs meet the criteria requested in the regulations to award the European Diploma for Protected Areas and underlined the existence of a management plan valid up to 2019.

Mr Dimitri Beridze, Deputy Chairman of the Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia, thanked the Group for considering the first application for European Diploma for Protected Areas from Georgia and Mr Lethier for his detailed report. He underlined that the administration of the VPAs is a priority for the authorities, as well as the management of the grazing inside the protected areas. Grazing is a tradition in Georgia and the authorities want to organise it in a sustainable way; awarding the European Diploma would represent an additional responsibility for the local authorities and the government to regulate the grazing in the Vashlovani Protected Areas as mentioned in the expert's report.

The Group agreed that the exceptional European interest of the areas is confirmed.

Further to the discussions on the proposed conditions and recommendations, the Group decided to reformulate the recommendation related to the grazing activities, to take into account the socio-economic context and all effects of grazing and to add a new recommendation related to the cross-border co-operation for the protection of large carnivores. The draft Resolution is included in Appendix III.

6. Renewal of the European Diploma in 2015: results of the on-the-spot appraisal, discussion and proposals to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

▪ National Park Weerribben-Wieden (Netherlands)

Relevant documents: T-PVS/DE (2015) 3 and T-PVS/DE (2015) 5

The expert, Mr Robert Brunner (Austria), presented the results of his visit to the National Park Weerribben-Wieden in Netherlands. He underlined that the national park, which includes the two reserves De Weerribben and De Wieden, is the biggest freshwater marshland in north-western Europe. Its management aims to maintain and restore a favourable conservation status for natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of interest. The expert analysed the implementation of the condition and recommendations of the last resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma to the areas. He pointed out that a management plan has been worked out, which is the basis of the day-to-day work, but so far it has not been officially adopted by the responsible authorities. Then he presented the new conditions and recommendations to the renewal of the diploma. The expert also recalled the wish of the Government of the Netherlands to strive for a joint European Diploma to the National Park Weerribben-Wieden when renewing the diploma in 2015.

To conclude, Mr Brunner recommended that the renewal for the regular ten-year period be shortened to five years in order to observe the adoption of the management plan and the developments with the financial issues.

The representatives of the areas present at the meeting, Ms Bea Claessens, Mr Egbert Beens and Mr Kragt Lammert, thanked the expert for his report and answered the members' questions. They agreed with a five-year renewal and the definition of the joint NATURA 2000 management plan as an official and binding document which will be considered as covering the requirements of the European Diploma.

Further to the discussions on the proposed conditions and recommendations, the Group decided to take off the draft condition 2 concerning a broader use of the European Diploma logo, and to mention it as a requirement by the Group to all Diploma areas.

The Group agreed with the expert's proposal to renew the European Diploma to the National Park Weerriben-Wieden for five years, underlining the need for a quick official adoption of the management plan. The draft Resolution is included in Appendix III.

7. Result of the exceptional on-the-spot appraisals, discussion and draft opinions

▪ Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) – Thayatal National Park (Austria)

Relevant documents: T-PVS/DE (2015) 4; T-PVS/DE (2015) 5

Mr Michal B. Usher, the independent expert (United Kingdom), thanked the administrations of the two parks for the warm welcome and pointed out their very close cooperation. He recalled the objectives of the exceptional appraisal decided by the Group in 2014: (1) help identifying the possible negative impact on threatened species and habitats, due to the possible construction of large wind turbines park(s) in Northern Austria, (2) assess the management of the hydropower plant Vranov with a view to ensure ecologically bearable flows under Vranov reservoir, Thaya river and Thaya tributaries, and (3) evaluate the harmonisation of the fishing regulations within the two parks.

The expert further informed that on the basis of detailed economic, scientific and sociological analyses, the Provincial Government of Lower Austria abandoned the plans for wind farms known as "Windpark Nord". He then presented his proposals for eleven recommendations about (1) wind farm development, (2) the River Thaya/Dyje and (3) fish and fishery.

The representatives of the Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic), Ms. Lenka Reiterova and Mr Robert Stejskal present at the meeting, thanked the expert for his report and answered the members' questions.

Further to the discussions on the proposed recommendations, the Group decided to modify the draft recommendation 8 on fishing management and to delete in the draft recommendation 11 the mention to the obstructions or creation of bypasses to assure the movement of fish.

The Group agreed to submit to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, via the Bureau, an Opinion with eleven recommendations to the States Parties, and proposed that the Group of Specialists is charged to follow-up their implementation through the annual reporting. A draft Resolution is appended to the Opinion, to be possibly proposed by the Standing Committee to the Committee of Ministers. The Opinion and the appended draft Resolution are included in Appendix IV.

▪ Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany)

Relevant documents: T-PVS/DE (2015) 8; T-PVS/DE (2015) 5

The objective of the visit was to assess the possible negative effects on the park biological diversity by a huge wind farm project planned near the park. The expert, Mr Olivier Biber (Switzerland), presented the findings of his visit and explained the difficult weather conditions, which did not enable to see much. He then showed a map from which it was obvious that the area planned for the wind farm is huge and very close to the national park. The expert underlined that the buffer zone of three km was reduced to one km and indicated the species that would be threatened by the construction of the planned wind farm. In addition, Mr Biber presented the findings regarding the landscape. He pointed out that the planning procedures and approval process seem very complicated and still raise open questions. He also underlined that according to the Regulations, one of the specific criteria for awarding the European Diploma is to guarantee that the existing human activities and installations in the surrounding area cannot damage the physical and biological integrity of the protected area. Eventually, Mr Biber presented the five recommendations he was proposing.

Mr Hans Kiener, representative of the Bayerischer Wald National Park administration, answered members' questions.

Mr. Alexander Kraus, from Landratsamt Regen representing the local approval authority for wind farms, informed that to date there were no concrete permit applications from investors to build up wind farms in the District of Wagensonnenriegel. He also confirmed that in case of a future permit application, there will be an approval procedure for each wind turbine, including an environmental assessment, with

focus on the interests of protected species according to Bavarian, German and European laws. He underlined that the concerned area was outside of the Bayerischer Wald National Park at a distance not less than 1 000 meters. In addition, he mentioned that the wind farms are part of the political strategy to provide possibilities to exit from the nuclear energy.

Further to the discussions on the proposed recommendations, the Group decided to add a condition on the necessity, prior to any wind park authorisation, of an environmental assessment that guarantees that the natural values having led to the designation of the Bayerischer Wald National Park as European Diploma for Protected Areas will be not significantly affected.

The Group agreed to submit to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, via the Bureau, an Opinion with one condition and five recommendations to the States Parties, and proposed that the Group of Specialists is charged to follow-up their implementation through the annual reporting. A draft Resolution is appended to the Opinion, to be possibly proposed by the Standing Committee to the Committee of Ministers. The Opinion and the appended draft Resolution are included in Appendix IV.

8. Annual reports 2014: presentation of the overall analysis and discussion by the Group

Relevant document: T-PVS/DE (2015) 6

The Secretariat reminded the objectives of the annual report and the Group's mandate related to it, which are defined by the Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas.

The Secretariat further informed that the purpose of the analysis was to examine the 2014 annual reports received, and more specifically the information on measures implemented to comply with the conditions and/or recommendations for the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Although many reports were submitted with important delay, the rate of annual reports submitted for 2014 was 81,94%, versus 65,21% for 2013. One of the possible factors of the increase is the simplified model plan for reporting. Ten Diploma areas still used the old model plan for reporting and thirteen Diploma areas have not submitted the annual report for 2014.

The table below provides the decision by the Group for each Diploma area, excepting those identified as in need of particular attention, which are presented at the item 9 of the agenda.

No	European Diploma area	Decision by the Group The Group:
1	Hautes Fagnes Nature Reserve, Belgium	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
2	Camargue National Reserve, France	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the evaluation of the implementation of the management plan for 2011-2015 and on the drafting and adoption of the management plan for 2016-2020.
3	Peak District National Park, United Kingdom	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Asked the authorities to use the current reporting format.
4	Krimml Waterfalls Natural Site, Austria	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the adoption of the management plan for the National Park Hohe Tauern, integrating the management of the Krimml Waterfalls.
5	Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve, Germany	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>
6	Muddus National Park, Sweden	Welcomed the fulfilment of the recommendations.
7	Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks, Sweden	Welcomed the fulfilment of the recommendations.

8	Swiss National Park, Switzerland	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations and congratulated for the excellent celebration of the centenary. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the buffer zone and Pass dal Fuorn road traffic.
9	Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park, Italy	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>
10	Wollmatinger Ried Untersee-Gnadensee Nature Reserve, Germany	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Encouraged the authorities to strengthening efforts to harmonise the protection measures by co-operation between Germany and Switzerland.
11	Boschplaat Nature Reserve, Netherlands	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the evaluation of the current management plan and the adoption of the new management plan.
12	Siebengebirge Nature Reserve, Germany	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations and greeted the likely abandoned plans to establish a Factory Outlet Centre at Königswinter.
13	Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park, Germany/ Luxembourg	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
14	Vanoise National Park ¹ , France	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations and the good co-operation with the “twinned” Diploma area Gran Paradiso National Park (Italy). Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the official adoption of the chart of the park.
15	Kuşçenneti National Park, Turkey	Welcomed the good management of the park and the good monitoring related to the water quality. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the evaluation of the wetland management plan for 2011-2015 and on the adoption of the management plan for the next period.
16	Weltenburger Enge Nature Reserve, Germany	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
17	Cretan White Mountains National Park, Greece	Welcomed the sending of the previous years reports and asked to use the correct plan type in 2015. Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the extension of the park boundaries proposed by the Specific Environmental Study.
18	Minsmere Nature Reserve, United Kingdom	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations.
19	Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve, United Kingdom	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations.
20	Purbeck Heritage Coast, United Kingdom	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations.

¹ Gran Paradiso National Park (Italy) and Vanoise National Park (France) consider their European Diplomas as “twinned” diplomas

21	Fair Isle National Scenic Area, United Kingdom	Welcomed the encouraging progress in the designation of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) and asked the authorities for updates, in the 2015 annual report, on the results of the assessment by Marine Scotland and on the process of establishment of the MPA.
22	Scandola Nature Reserve, France	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>
23	Sasso Fratino Integral Nature Reserve, Italy	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations.
24	Doñana National Park, Spain	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the developments with the adoption of the two management plans.
25	Bayerischer Wald National Park, Germany	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Discussed the expert's report following the on-the-spot appraisal (document Doc T-PVS/DE (2015) 8) and submitted to the Standing Committee via its Bureau an Opinion with a possible draft Resolution (see item 7 of the agenda and Appendix IV).
26	Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park, Spain	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the final adoption of the new land and management plan due to be finished by the end of 2014.
27	Store Mosse National Park, Sweden	Welcomed the work on the implementation of the recommendations. Asked the authorities for clarification, in the 2015 annual report, whether the trend to decrease the funding has continued or has reversed.
28	Bullerö and Långviksskär Nature Reserves, Sweden	Welcomed the work on the implementation of the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the updating of the management plan and the designation of the national park.
29	Montecristo Island Nature Reserve, Italy	Welcomed the progress in implementing some of the recommendations.
30	Wurzacher Ried Nature Reserve, Germany	Welcomed the progress in implementing most of the recommendations. Encouraged authorities on further efforts to purchase areas, important for reaching conservation goals, as well as to reconstruct the alternative power line.
31	Teide National Park, Spain	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
32	Berchtesgaden National Park, Germany	Welcomed the very visible progress made regarding the new national park centre "House der Berge". Encouraged authorities to take some immediate measures in order to prepare the new management plan before additional staff will start to work on the topic. Asked the authorities to use the current reporting format.

33	Ecrins National Park, France	Greeted the progress in implementing all recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the development of various forms of leisure and sporting activities and on the financial and staffing difficulties.
34	Maremma Regional Park, Italy	Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the correct resolution CM/ResDip(2012)9. Welcomed the successful project on the osprey re-introduction. Encouraged the actions to create the park trademark, increase the visibility and remediate to the economic difficulties.
35	Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve, Portugal	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to use the current reporting format.
36	Mercantour National Park, France	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
37	Maritime Alps Nature Park, Italy	Welcomed the fulfilment of conditions and recommendations.
38	Wachau Protected Landscape, Austria	Greeted the progress in implementing all recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the continuation of the grants from the EU, particularly to integrate the European Diploma management into a larger bundle of nature protection related management projects.
39	Oka National Biosphere Reserve, Russian Federation	Welcomed the progress in implementing most of the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the participatory management of the floodplain meadows with all the stakeholders and especially landowners.
40	Teberda National Biosphere Reserve, Russian Federation	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015. Asked for information, in the annual report, on the developments concerning the ski resort.
41	Ipolytarnóc Protected Area, Hungary	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the results of replacement of the exotic trees with the indigenous species, and on the geotourism in the area. Asked the authorities to use the current reporting format.
42	Szénás Hills Protected Area, Hungary	Welcome the progress in implementing all recommendations.
43	Berezinsky State Biosphere Reserve, Belarus	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Congratulated the authorities for the 90th anniversary of the reserve.
44	National Park Weerribben-Wieden, Netherlands	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Discussed the expert's report following the on-the-spot appraisal (document Doc T-PVS/DE (2015) 3) and submitted to the Standing Committee via its Bureau a draft Resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma (see item 6 of the agenda and Appendix III).

45	Seitsemien National Park, Finland	Welcomed the fulfilment of the conditions and recommendations.
46	Ekenäs Archipelago National Park, Finland	Welcomed the fulfilment of the conditions and recommendations.
47	Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, Belarus	Welcomed the progress in implementing the conditions and recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the revision of the national park management plan.
48	Port-Cros National Park, France	Welcomed the actions taken. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the progress in implementing the recommendations and in finding a solution to financial and staffing difficulties.
49	Bialowieża National Park ² , Poland	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>
50	Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, Ukraine	Regretted the lack of annual reporting in 2014 ³ and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
51	Poloniny National Park, Slovak Republic	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>
52	Bieszczady National Park	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the final adoption of the management plan and on the possible threats on the park by the Promotional Forest Complex.
53	Dobročský National Nature Reserve, Slovak Republic	Welcomed the progress in implementing the condition and recommendations.
54	Kostomuksha Strict Nature Reserve, Russian Federation	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
55	Tsentralno-Chernozemny Biosphere Reserve, Russian Federation	Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the correct resolution CM/ResDip(2012)12. Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Asked the authorities to report in the 2015 annual report on the creation of the buffer zone.
56	De Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve, Netherlands	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Welcomed the likely decision to keep away from the reserve the aircraft routes and asked the authorities to continue to report in 2015 on this issue.
57	Bilé Karpaty Protected Landscape Area, Czech Republic	Regretted the lack of annual reporting and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
58	Karlštejn National Nature Reserve, Czech Republic	Regretted the lack of annual reporting in 2014 ⁴ and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.

² The renewal of the European Diploma award was suspended in 2007 due to the non-completion of the procedure for adopting the management plan.

³ Note by the Secretariat: the annual report for 2014 was provided by the authorities on 26 March 2015, after the meeting of the Group of Specialists.

⁴ Note by the Secretariat: the annual report for 2014 was provided by the authorities on 31 March 2015, after the meeting of the Group of Specialists.

59	Podyjí National Park, Czech Republic	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations. Discussed the expert's report following the on-the-spot appraisal (document Doc T-PVS/DE (2015) 4) and submitted to the Standing Committee via its Bureau an Opinion with a possible draft Resolution (see item 7 of the agenda and Appendix IV).
60	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Romania	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations. Asked the authorities for information in the annual report for 2015 on the poaching and irregular fishing in the reserve.
61	Thayatal National Park, Austria	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations and the ban of the hunting with lead-ammunition. Discussed the expert's report following the on-the-spot appraisal (document Doc T-PVS/DE (2015) 4) and submitted to the Standing Committee via its Bureau an Opinion with a possible draft Resolution (see item 7 of the agenda and Appendix IV).
62	Matsalu National Park, Estonia	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations.
63	Tihany Peninsula, Hungary	Regretted the lack of annual reporting in 2014 and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
64	Triglav National Park, Slovenia	Welcomed the progress in implementing all the recommendations and congratulated the park management for the results due to good co-operation inside and outside the park. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the adoption of the management plan.
65	Naardermeer Nature Reserve, Netherlands	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>
66	Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli, Italy	Welcomed the progress in implementing all the recommendations. Asked the authorities to use the current reporting format.
67	Gran Paradiso National Park ⁵ , Italy	Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations and the good co-operation with the "twinned" Diploma area Vanoise National Park (France). Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the staffing development and the official adoption of the management plan.
68	Piatra Craiului National Park, Romania	Welcomed the progress in implementing all recommendations.
69	Retezat National Park, Romania	Welcomed the progress already made. Asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the official adoption of the management plan.
70	Central Balkan National Park ⁶ , Bulgaria	<i>See item 9 for areas in need of particular attention.</i>

⁵ Gran Paradiso National Park (Italy) and Vanoise National Park (France) consider their European Diplomas as "twinned" diplomas

⁶ The renewal of the diploma to the park was suspended in 2014, until a new management plan for the area is formally adopted

71	Khosrov State Forest Reserve, Armenia	Regretted the lack of annual reporting in 2014 and asked the authorities to submit the annual report for 2015.
72	The Burren region, Ireland	Encouraged the authorities to continue their enthusiastic work. Welcomed the progress in implementing the recommendations.
73	Desertas Nature Reserve, Portugal	Asked the authorities to submit the first annual report for 2015.

With regards to raising awareness for the European Diploma and according to Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1, Article 6.4, the Group decided to demand all the Diploma areas to make a broader use of the European Diploma logo, whenever possible, on the websites of their respective areas, in joint presentations, new brochures, maps and leaflets, and in the visitor centres, together with an explanation of the reasons for awarding the European Diploma, e.g. with a link to the Council of Europe website.

In addition, the Group asked the Diploma areas to report in the annual report on the implementation of this demand.

9. Annual reports: discussion by the Group

▪ Suggested actions for European Diploma areas in need of particular attention

▪ *Relevant document: T-PVS/DE(2015) 6*

The Group debated the situation of the following areas identified as requiring special attention:

- **Lüneburg Heath Nature Reserve (Germany)**

The main threat in 2014 was still the planned Volkwardingen Wind Park which would spoil the unique landscape of Lüneburger Heide. However, in 2014 the Higher Administrative Court of Lower Saxony declared the planning document inaccurate and removed the zoning for Volkwardingen Wind Park.

The Group welcomed the decision by the Higher Administrative Court of Lower Saxony to remove the zoning for Volkwardingen Wind Park; it underlined that according to the Regulations, one of the specific criteria for awarding the European Diploma is to guarantee that the existing human activities and installations in the surrounding area cannot damage the physical and biological integrity of the protected area and strongly encouraged the authorities to continue to preserve the Diploma area.

The Group asked the authorities to report in 2015 on this issue and to use the current reporting format.

- **Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park (Italy)**

The main issue continues to be the official adoption of the new management plan, due by 2013. Other difficulties identified are the definition of buffer areas around the park and the low competence of the park administration on sanitary issues (highlighted by the death of a female bear with tuberculosis, probably the result of contaminated grasslands by cows).

The Group decided to follow-up the adoption of the management plan for the park and the implementation of the management plan for the chamois and asked the authorities to report in 2015 on these issues. The Group also asked the authorities to use the current reporting format.

The Group encouraged the park administration to gain some expertise on wildlife disease control, and welcomed the full articulation and cooperation between entities managing this issue.

- **Scandola Nature Reserve (France)**

In 2012, the Secretariat received a message from the authorities of the reserve informing about risks of negative impact and potential pollution by hydrocarbons due to a possible oil drilling exploitation in the Mediterranean Sea around the reserve of Scandola and other national parks. Neither the reserve authorities, nor the French focal point of the Bern Convention answered to the letter and e-mails sent by

the Secretariat in 2014 to ask for further information on this issue. The authorities had not sent the annual reports for 2013 and 2014. However, the park administration informed by e-mail in 2014 that the management plan for 2014–2018 was validated by intermediate authorities and was submitted for official validation in 2014 to the “Collectivité Territoriale de Corse”.

The Secretariat also informed the Group about the request to the State Party, by the World Heritage Centre, to elaborate a global management plan and to submit before 1 February 2016 a detailed report on the conservation status, taking into account the Council of Europe recommendations.

The Group welcomed the progress made on the validation of the management plan for 2014-2018 and asked the authorities to report in 2015 on its final adoption.

The Group reiterated its request to the authorities for updated information on the possible pollution risks by hydrocarbons and strongly encouraged them to send the annual report for 2015.

- **Białowieża National Park (Poland)**

The renewal of the European Diploma has been suspended since 2007 due to the non-completion of the procedure to adopt the management plan. Finally, the plan was officially adopted in 2014.

Ms Renata Krzysciak-Kosinska, representative of the Białowieża National Park, presented the main updates and answered the members' questions. She informed that strengthening the protection of the Białowieża Forest is a priority for the Ministry of the environment which also decided to limit the timber exploitation from the Białowieża Forest managed by the State Forest administration. In addition, Ms Krzysciak-Kosinska informed about the extension in 2014, by the World Heritage Centre, of the “Belovezhskaya Pushcha / Białowieża Forest, Belarus, Poland”, which become “Białowieża Forest, Belarus, Poland”. The European Diploma area is included in this new extended World Heritage Site.

The Group congratulated the Polish authorities and the authorities of the park for the significant progress and more particularly for the official adoption of the management plan.

It further instructed the Secretariat to organise a fresh on-the-spot appraisal of an expert in 2015, in view of renewing the European Diploma.

- **Poloniny National Park (Slovak Republic)**

The main issues identified concern the long-term absence of a management plan, the need to strengthen the legal capacity of the park administration to manage the area and the forest management. However, several activities related to issues of forestry, sustainable development and raising awareness have been completed within a Swiss-Slovak project, the wolf hunting has finally been prohibited in the park and a non-binding action plan has been developed as an interim measure.

The Secretariat informed that the funding granted by the Council of Europe, in support of the work to be carried out to comply with the conditions and recommendations attached to the renewal of the European Diploma, was withdrawn as not used within the terms of the contract.

In addition, the Group was informed about the expert's report following a reactive monitoring mission of UNESCO/IUCN organised in autumn 2014 to the Slovak part of the UNESCO site, which also underlines the concern about the integrity and management of the component sites in Slovakia, and particularly about the Poloniny National Park. The Group took as well note of the Report of the State Party of Slovakia on the State of Conservancy of the World Heritage Property and its response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee, which gives specific information on the challenges related to forest management in Poloniny National Park. The expert proposed to consider the participation of the Council of Europe with IUCN, UNESCO and the MaB Programme experts in a conference to be organised by the Slovak authorities in 2015.

The Group welcomed the prohibition of the wolf hunting in the park.

The Group recalled that in 2013 it formulated an opinion in which it considered the possibility of recommending the Standing Committee to withdraw the European Diploma if no significant progress in adopting the measures requested was proved by its next meeting. After extensive discussions on the

problems faced by the park, the Group decided to react depending of the severity of the threats and in line with the tools provided by the European Diploma regulations. It therefore decided to submit to the Standing Committee, via the Bureau, a draft Resolution on the withdrawal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to Poloniny National Park, to be possibly proposed by the Standing Committee to the Committee of Ministers. The draft Resolution and the Opinion adopted in 2013 are included in Appendix V.

- **Naardermeer Nature Reserve (Netherlands)**

There are several issues identified, the main of which concerns the corridor to the North under the motorway A1 and the designing of the adjacent zone towards IJsselmeer which is still in preparation. Another important issue is related to the funding: it is likely there is not enough budget to realise the total of 21 eco-zones under the railway to be effective for different marsh species. The government budget cuts on nature preservation will also certainly have effects on the management of Naardermeer. In addition, the annual report informs that the present policy of the government will make further purchase of land even more difficult and might lead to end this at all in the long term.

The annual report also mentions several assets and the good monitoring of the area in 2014: the LIFE programme New LIFE for Dutch fens is making progress, a new guided tour towards the buffer zone is presented, new maps and booklets about plants and animals in Naardenmeer are available to visitors for boat excursions.

The Group welcomed the reported assets.

The Group took note of the issues identified and decided to follow-up their evolution in 2015. It asked the authorities to report in 2015 on the financial contributions by Natuurmonumenten, relevant authorities and other partners, to comply with the conditions and recommendations to the renewal of the European Diploma to the reserve. It also requested the authorities to report in 2015 on the corridor under the motorway A1 and asked them to use the current reporting format.

- **Central Balkan National Park (Bulgaria)**

The renewal of the European Diploma to the park has been suspended since 2014, pending the official adoption of a new management plan. The management plan has not been officially adopted, yet; some progress was however made and by the beginning of 2015 it should be submitted for consideration to the Supreme Expert Environmental Council at the Ministry of Environment and Water.

The Group decided to postpone the renewal of the European Diploma until the management plan is officially adopted and asked the authorities to report on the issue.

▪ **Possible exceptional on-the-spot appraisals**

▪ *Relevant document: T-PVS/DE(2015) 6*

According to the discussion on the Bialowieża National Park held previously, an on-the-spot appraisal of the park should take place in 2015 in view of the renewal of the European Diploma.

The Secretariat informed the Group that there was no other visit to be carried out in 2015 with a view to the possible renewal of the European Diploma in 2016.

10. Workshop “Protected Areas in Europe: the next 50 years” on 21 and 22 May 2015 at the Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli, Italy

The Secretariat informed about the achievements related to the 50th anniversary of the European Diploma: the dedicated logo, the mention on the pocket diary of the Council of Europe, the dedicated Web page, the brochure, the short film, the posters with Diploma areas using all the same template and the visibility material (flags, tee-shirts, bags and bloc-notes).

The Secretariat briefly mentioned the ceremony organised during the lunch break of the meeting of the Group at the Council of Europe, hosted by Ambassador Dirk Van Eeckhout, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the Council of Europe and Chair of the Committee of Ministers, and with the participation of the Deputy Secretary General, the Chair of the Standing Committee, the Chair and

the members of the Group of Specialists and the other participants in the meeting of the Group the same day. The exhibition of posters and the film dedicated to the Diploma areas were officially presented during the ceremony.

The Secretariat then informed about the up-coming workshop on the theme “Protected Areas in Europe: the next 50 years”, on 21-22 May 2015 at the Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli in Italy, with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Environment of Italy and the Tuscany Region. The objective of the workshop is to bring together managers of Protected Areas and experts and to discuss the challenges that Protected Areas face in an interconnected world where technology and globalisation are changing people’s perception of the natural environment and the role of Protected Areas. Four thematic sessions of case studies followed by debates are organised and a final declaration will be presented at the end of the workshop.

In addition, the Diploma areas have been invited to organise celebrations dedicated to the 50th anniversary at local, regional and national level and to inform the Secretariat and the Group of Specialists about.

The detail of activities organised on the occasion of the 50th anniversary can be consulted at the address: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/nature/diploma/50anniversary_2015_EN.asp?

The Group discussed about the achievements and proposed to make wide use of the material produced for the 50th anniversary.

The Group debated on the final declaration and considered that there should be clear whom the main message is to be addressed to. It proposed that the General Rapporteur work on a proposal.

The Group appreciated the work already achieved on the preparation of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary and instructed the Secretariat to continue the organisation of the workshop in Italy in line with the proposals by the Group.

11. Date of the next meeting

The Secretariat would notify members of the date of the next meeting, to be held in 2016, in due course.

12. Other business

None

13. Closure

The Chair thanked the members of the Group, the experts and the representatives of the areas for their contribution during the meeting. The Chair also thanked the Secretariat for the work in the preparation of the meeting and of all the needed documents.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair.

Appendix I – List of participants

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Appendix II – Agenda

Friday 13 March 2015

9.15 am – 9.45 am Welcome and opening of the meeting

1. Opening of the meeting by Mr Peter Skoberne (Slovenia), Chair of the Group, and Mr Øystein Størkersen (Norway), Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention

2. Adoption of the draft agenda

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 1]

3. General information on activities of the Bern Convention relevant for the work of the Group

4. Short presentation by the Chair of the minutes of the meeting of the Group in 2014 and of activities undertaken during the last year

[Document T-PVS/DE (2014) 11]

9.45 am - 10.15 am Application for the award of the European Diploma

5. Result of the on-the-spot appraisal, discussion and proposals to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- Vashlovani Protected Areas (Georgia), *Mr Hervé Lethier*

[Document T-PVS/DE (2014) 8]

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 2]

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 5]

10.15 am -10.45 am Renewal of the European Diploma in 2015

6. Result of the on-the-spot appraisal, discussion and proposals to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- National Park Weerribben-Wieden (Netherlands), *Mr Robert Brunner*

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 3]

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 5]

10.45 am -11.00 am Coffee break

11.00 am -12.00 am Exceptional on-the spot appraisals

7. Result of the exceptional on-the-spot appraisals, discussion and draft opinions:

- Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) – Thayatal National Park (Austria), *Mr Michael B. Usher*

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 4]

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 5]

- Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany), *Mr Olivier Biber*

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 8]

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 5]

12.00 am – 12.30 am Annual reports 2014

8. Annual reports: presentation of the overall analysis and discussion by the Group

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 6]

12.30 am – 2.30 pm Break

***Ceremony of the 50th anniversary of the
European Diploma for Protected Areas***

*1.00 pm - 2.00 pm
Entry Hall, Palais, Council of Europe*

2.30 pm – 4.30 pm Annual reports 2014 (continued)

9. Annual reports: discussion by the Group

- Suggested actions for European Diploma areas in need of particular attention
- Possible exceptional on-the-spot appraisals

[Document T-PVS/DE (2015) 6]

4.30 pm – 4.45 pm Coffee break**4.45 pm – 5.45 pm Celebration of the 50th anniversary of the European Diploma in Italy**

10. Workshop “Protected Areas in Europe: the next 50 years” on 21 and 22 May 2015 at the Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli, Italy

- Information by the Secretariat on the organisation of the workshop
- Discussion by the Group on the expectations and outcomes of the workshop

5.45 pm – 6.00 pm Other business and closure of the meeting

11. Date of the next meeting

12. Other business

13. Closure

*A dinner will be organised in an Alsatian restaurant (8.00 pm) to gather participants if they wish. More information will be given during the meeting.
Please note that this is not an invitation of the Council of Europe.*

Appendix III – Draft Resolutions on the award and the renewal of the ED in 2015

Draft Resolution CM/ResDip(2015) ... on the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Vashlovani Protected Areas (Georgia)

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on ... 2015
at the ... meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65)6 instituting the European Diploma for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features, as amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas on 13 March 2015;

Having regard to the proposals of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Vashlovani Protected Areas (Georgia) which include five areas: the Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve, the Vashlovani National Park, the Alazani Riparian Forest Natural Monument, the Takhti-Tepa Natural Monument and the Eagle Canyon Natural Monument; recognises the European significance of these areas which have remarkable landscapes; exceptional geological features; rich and diverse flora and fauna, including rare species; and ecosystems of particular importance for European biodiversity;

Places the aforesaid areas under the patronage of the Council of Europe until 2020;

Attaches the following two conditions to the award:

1. by the end of 2015, remove the shelters located on the immediate border of the Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve, and rigorously enforce the existing regulation for grazing in the reserve;
2. accelerate the drafting process of a comprehensive sustainable grazing management plan, taking into account the socio-economic context and the effects of grazing, positive and negative, on the long-term conservation of the features of the Vashlovani Protected Areas; this plan will have clear objectives, a time frame for implementation and indicators of progress, and will address the matter of dismantlement and relocation of grazing equipment and activities outside the strict nature protection areas and the restoration of degraded zones of the Vashlovani National Park. A draft will be submitted to the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma by the end of 2016, with alternative grazing areas located at a reasonable distance from the borders of the zones where these activities are forbidden; the State Party is also urged to enforce the existing regulation on grazing in the whole Diploma area, without delay, and to limit grazing activities to the carrying capacity for the Vashlovani Protected Areas (to be determined);

Attaches the following seven recommendations to the award:

1. develop and fund an operational and comprehensive monitoring programme of the Diploma area; this programme should be focused on the specific natural and landscape features of the Diploma area and the anthropogenic pressures on it;

2. prepare and implement a programme to maintain and renovate field equipment and the infrastructure for tourists and visitors;
3. pursue, update and complement inventories and mapping of species and habitats (distribution, abundance, state of conservation and tendencies), taking into account the Emerald Network's standards and requirements;
4. secure the Vashlovani Protected Areas core budget, from internal sources preferably, and provide funding to ensure that the 2013-19 management plan is fully implemented;
5. start the process of drafting the next management plan in a timely manner, so that the whole award period of the European Diploma for the Vashlovani Protected Areas is covered;
6. improve further the expertise and skills of the staff members, especially in the field of ecology and the knowledge and monitoring of species;
7. continue and develop cross-border co-operation for the protection of large carnivores.

* * *

**Draft Resolution CM/ResDip(2015) ...
on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to
the National Park Weerribben-Wieden (Netherlands)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on ... 2015
at the ... meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65)6 instituting the European Diploma for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features, as amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (95)20 on the award of the European Diploma to the De Weerribben Nature Reserve (Netherlands);

Having regard to Resolution CM/ResDip(2010)8 on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the De Weerribben Nature Reserve (Netherlands) and to its extension to the De Wieden Nature Reserve (Netherlands);

Taking note of the Government of the Netherlands' wish for a joint European Diploma to the National Park Weerribben-Wieden when renewing the diploma in 2015;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas on 13 March 2015;

Having regard to the proposals of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention,

Renews the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the De Weerribben Nature Reserve and to its extension to the De Wieden Nature Reserve, jointly presented under the name "National Park Weerribben-Wieden", until 2020;

Attaches the following condition to the renewal:

1. urge the responsible authorities to adopt the joint Natura 2000 management plan, by the end of 2016, as an official and binding document which will be considered as covering the requirements of the European Diploma;

Attaches the following eight recommendations to the renewal:

1. implement a monitoring programme to evaluate the effects of the new connection between De Weerribben and De Wieden, the construction of which was finished by the end of 2014, at least on important and/or endangered species, considering the exemplary role of the project;
2. monitor the further development of fish stocks, with an emphasis on eels, to strengthen the ecological function of the reserves and natural reproduction in line with Natura 2000 requirements;
3. limit the impact of fishing by defining a maximum number of licenses or limiting the catch; define methods to avoid secondary catches of otter or other species; and ensure the further development of a management plan for fish stocks covering all species, as requested in the previous resolution on the renewal of the European Diploma;
4. carefully observe the development of boating on the Kalenberger Gracht and set limits (for example a maximum number and/or size of boats) or provide for measures in case of increasing numbers of larger boats;
5. continue with the designation of adjoining areas as extensions of, or buffer zones to, the protected areas, especially to the north (Rottige Meente) and south-east (Staphorster Veld), and create a connection between the two separate parts of De Wieden Nature Reserve between the Zuideindiger Wiede and the Bovenwiede;
6. review contracts with business owners and landowners with regard to habitat management, and especially the duration of these contracts, to ensure that management can be directed by the responsible authorities and to prevent long-term and irredeemable contracts through which the reserve authorities have limited leverage;
7. observe possible threats which may occur due to the intensification of agriculture, changes in water management or construction of wind farms;
8. secure adequate funds to convert the Ossenzijl information centre, at least in part, into an educational centre geared towards young people.

Appendix IV – Opinions in 2015 with appended draft Resolutions**Opinion following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) and the Thayatal National Park (Austria) - with appended draft Resolution****Opinion****of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) and the Thayatal National Park (Austria)**

After examining the report drawn up by the independent expert following the exceptional appraisal, the objectives of which were to: (1) help identifying the possible negative impact on threatened species and habitats, due to the possible construction of large wind farm park(s) in Northern Austria, (2) assess the management of the hydropower plant Vranov with a view to ensure ecologically bearable flows under Vranov reservoir, Thaya river and Thaya tributaries, and (3) evaluate the harmonisation of the fishing regulations within the two parks, the Group of Specialists:

- (a) takes note of the conclusions of the report by the independent expert and the recommendations it provides;
- (b) notes the good cooperation between the two national parks;
- (c) submits to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, via the Bureau, the current opinion with the following eleven recommendations to the States Parties, and proposes that the Group of Specialists is charged to follow-up their implementation through the annual reporting:

Recommendations about wind farm development

1. in any wind farm development, planned in the vicinity (i.e. within 12 to 15km) of either the Thayatal National Park or the Podyjí National Park, ornithological data, collected over a period of at least one year, must be obtained. Other data, for example on bat activity and bird/mammal migration routes, should also be collected by appropriate stakeholders, co-ordinated by the national park authorities. All data should be made publically available for scrutiny in an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development;
2. given the importance of landscape in the border country between Austria and the Czech Republic, when funds become available (from regional or local authorities) it would be beneficial to carry out a ‘landscape character assessment’, not just of the two national parks and their buffer zones but also of the land which surrounds the national parks;
3. all authorities should use the guidance in the Bern Convention’s paper *Wind Farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment* (paper T-PVS/Inf (2013) 15);

Recommendations about the River Thaya/Dyje

4. efforts should continue to be made to bring the river into ‘good ecological potential’ according to the Water Framework Directive. In achieving this aim the fish population needs to be improved and the presence of dead wood (coarse woody debris) in the river should continue to be encouraged and monitored;

5. the minimum flow in the river should be set at as great a level as possible. The present minimum levels of $2.8 \text{ m}^3 \text{ sec}^{-1}$ (summer) and $3.3 \text{ m}^3 \text{ sec}^{-1}$ (winter) should be maintained and should become legally enforceable. The flow rate should never be permitted to drop below these minimum rates, except at times of absolute necessity (i.e. during a prolonged drought) which should be on the basis of agreement between the Podyjí National Park, the E.ON Company and the relevant agencies of national, regional and local government;
6. strong surges of water should be avoided as far as is possible and consistent with the safe operation of the VHP. Instead of sharp peaks in the flow rate, every effort should be made by the operators of the Vranov Dam to flatten out the peaks by more gradual build up to larger flow rates. Except at times of flood, it is preferable not to have three turbines operating simultaneously at full capacity;

Recommendations about the fish and fishery

7. in the short term, the two National Park administrations should cooperate with each other, and with the fishermen's associations, to agree annual brown trout re-stocking rates, screening of stock prior to release for diseases, and the provenance of the young trout to be released. Agreement should also be reached about whether or not to introduce young grayling. However, in the longer term, it would be beneficial for the naturalness of the river to phase out the re-stocking of any fish species. No further releases of either rainbow trout or brook trout should be permitted between the Vranov Dam and the Znojmo Dam;
8. given the close cooperation which exists between the administrations of the two National Parks, there would be considerable benefits if both are consulted by the Czech Ministry of Agriculture when deciding on fishing management in the Podyjí National Park;
9. the sections of fishing zones Dyje 12, 13 and 14 should be reconsidered by the Czech authorities. There would be considerable benefits for the two National Parks if fishing could be progressively phased out in zone Dyje 13 (the zone along the border between Austria and the Czech Republic);
10. the fish stocks in the river need to be periodically monitored by the national parks authorities in cooperation with appropriate stakeholders. Management of the fish stocks can then be agreed on the basis of evidence gathered during monitoring. The results of all monitoring and research, irrespective of who funded it, should be made publically available so that the data are used for the benefit of all stakeholders;
11. thought should be given to the environmental benefits of building a fish ladder along Znojmo dam linking the Vranov-Znojmo section of the river with its reaches downstream below Znojmo.

The Standing Committee may also instruct the Secretariat of the Bern Convention to prepare some guidance on Wind Farms and landscape, similar to the guidance *Wind Farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment* (paper T-PVS/Inf (2013) 15).

Draft Resolution following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) and the Thayatal National Park (Austria) - to be possibly proposed by the Standing Committee to the Committee of Ministers

CM Documents

CM(2015)

...Meeting,2015
Sustainable Development

Standing Committee to the Bern Convention Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas (T-PVS/DE)

**Draft Resolution CM/ResDip(2015) ...
following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to
the Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) and the Thayatal National Park (Austria)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on ... 2015
at the ... meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65)6 instituting the European Diploma for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features, as amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas on 13 March 2015;

Having regard to the good cooperation between the two national parks;

Having regard to the proposals of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention;

Requests Czech and Austrian authorities to consider the following eleven recommendations:

Recommendations about wind farm development

1. in any wind farm development, planned in the vicinity (i.e. within 12 to 15km) of either the Thayatal National Park or the Podyjí National Park, ornithological data, collected over a period of at least one year, must be obtained. Other data, for example on bat activity and bird/mammal migration routes, should also be collected by appropriate stakeholders, coordinated by the national park authorities. All data should be made publically available for scrutiny in an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development;
2. given the importance of landscape in the border country between Austria and the Czech Republic, when funds become available (from regional or local authorities) it would be

beneficial to carry out a 'landscape character assessment', not just of the two national parks and their buffer zones but also of the land which surrounds the national parks;

3. all authorities should use the guidance in the Bern Convention's paper *Wind Farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment* (paper T-PVS/Inf (2013) 15);

Recommendations about the River Thaya/Dyje

4. efforts should continue to be made to bring the river into 'good ecological potential' according to the Water Framework Directive. In achieving this aim the fish population needs to be improved and the presence of dead wood (coarse woody debris) in the river should continue to be encouraged and monitored;
5. the minimum flow in the river should be set at as great a level as possible. The present minimum levels of $2.8 \text{ m}^3 \text{ sec}^{-1}$ (summer) and $3.3 \text{ m}^3 \text{ sec}^{-1}$ (winter) should be maintained and should become legally enforceable. The flow rate should never be permitted to drop below these minimum rates, except at times of absolute necessity (i.e. during a prolonged drought) which should be on the basis of agreement between the Podyjí National Park, the E.ON Company and the relevant agencies of national, regional and local government;
6. strong surges of water should be avoided as far as is possible and consistent with the safe operation of the VHP. Instead of sharp peaks in the flow rate, every effort should be made by the operators of the Vranov Dam to flatten out the peaks by more gradual build up to larger flow rates. Except at times of flood, it is preferable not to have three turbines operating simultaneously at full capacity;

Recommendations about the fish and fishery

7. in the short term, the two National Park administrations should cooperate with each other, and with the fishermen's associations, to agree annual brown trout re-stocking rates, screening of stock prior to release for diseases, and the provenance of the young trout to be released. Agreement should also be reached about whether or not to introduce young grayling. However, in the longer term, it would be beneficial for the naturalness of the river to phase out the re-stocking of any fish species. No further releases of either rainbow trout or brook trout should be permitted between the Vranov Dam and the Znojmo Dam;
8. given the close cooperation which exists between the administrations of the two National Parks, there would be considerable benefits if both are consulted by the Czech Ministry of Agriculture when deciding on fishing management in the Podyjí National Park;
9. the sections of fishing zones Dyje 12, 13 and 14 should be reconsidered by the Czech authorities. There would be considerable benefits for the two National Parks if fishing could be progressively phased out in zone Dyje 13 (the zone along the border between Austria and the Czech Republic);
10. the fish stocks in the river need to be periodically monitored by the national parks authorities in cooperation with appropriate stakeholders. Management of the fish stocks can then be agreed on the basis of evidence gathered during monitoring. The results of all monitoring and research, irrespective of who funded it, should be made publically available so that the data are used for the benefit of all stakeholders;

11. thought should be given to the environmental benefits of building a fish ladder along Znojmo dam linking the Vranov-Znojmo section of the river with its reaches downstream below Znojmo.

Opinion following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany) - with appended draft Resolution

Opinion

of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany)

After examining the report drawn up by the independent expert following the exceptional appraisal, the objective of which was to assess the possible effects on the park biological diversity by a large wind farm planned to be constructed near the park, including possible cumulative impacts in case of further wind-energy developments in the area, the Group of Specialists:

- (a) takes note of the conclusions of the report by the independent expert and the recommendations it provides;
- (b) submits to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, via the Bureau, the current opinion with one condition and five recommendations to the State Party, and proposes that the Group of Specialists is charged to follow-up their implementation through the annual reporting:

Condition:

1. no wind park is authorised without a prior environmental assessment that guarantees that the natural values having led to the designation of the Bayerischer Wald National Park as European Diploma for Protected Areas will be not significantly affected.

Recommendations:

1. in the frame of the further development of the wind farm project, data on breeding birds potentially threatened by the impact of windmills on and around the areas where the implantation of windmills has been identified as feasible (notably Vorranggebiet 43, as well as 100/101/102 and 52) should be collected during at least one year. Existing data should be included;
2. similarly, existing data on bats in the same area should be analysed and presented and new complementary data should be collected during at least one year;
3. the existing data, including telemetry information, and other data on lynx showing breeding and resting sites of the animals in and around the national park should be analysed and presented in the frame of the further development of the wind farm project. As rock habitats are of outstanding importance for the rearing of the young, special attention should be given to the use of these habitats in the surroundings of the national park;
4. given the importance of the landscape aspect, a landscape character assessment should be provided for the vicinity of the park, in particular the area where the wind farm is planned;
5. guidance should be sought in the Bern Convention's document "*Wind Farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment*" (T-PVS/Inf (2013) 15).

The Standing Committee may also instruct the Secretariat of the Bern Convention to prepare some guidance on Wind Farms and landscape, similar to the guidance *Wind Farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment* (paper T-PVS/Inf (2013) 15).

Draft Resolution following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany) - to be possibly proposed by the Standing Committee to the Committee of Ministers

CM Documents

CM(2015)

...Meeting,2015
Sustainable Development

Standing Committee to the Bern Convention Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas (T-PVS/DE)

**Draft Resolution CM/ResDip(2015) ...
following the exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on ... 2015
at the ... meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features, as amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas on 13 March 2015;

Having regard to the proposals of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention;

Request German authorities to take appropriate protective measures to guarantee that natural values having led to the designation of the Bayerischer Wald National Park as European Diploma for Protected Areas, are not significantly affected by the proposed wind farm development;

Request German authorities to carry out, prior to any authorisation for wind parks, an appropriate environmental assessment ensuring that significant damage to the park will not follow, as otherwise the European Diploma for Protected Areas might be withdrawn;

Requests German authorities to consider the following five recommendations:

1. in the frame of the further development of the wind farm project, data on breeding birds potentially threatened by the impact of windmills on and around the areas where the implantation of windmills has been identified as feasible (notably Vorranggebiet 43, as well as 100/101/102 and 52) should be collected during at least one year. Existing data should be included;
2. similarly, existing data on bats in the same area should be analysed and presented and new complementary data should be collected during at least one year;

3. the existing data, including telemetry information, and other data on lynx showing breeding and resting sites of the animals in and around the national park should be analysed and presented in the frame of the further development of the wind farm project. As rock habitats are of outstanding importance for the rearing of the young, special attention should be given to the use of these habitats in the surroundings of the national park;
4. given the importance of the landscape aspect, a landscape character assessment should be provided for the vicinity of the park, in particular the area where the wind farm is planned;
5. guidance should be sought in the Bern Convention's document "*Wind Farms and Birds: an updated analysis of the effects of wind farms on birds, and best practice guidance on integrated planning and impact assessment*" (T-PVS/Inf (2013) 15).

Appendix V – Draft Resolution on the withdrawal of the ED**Draft Resolution on the withdrawal of the European Diploma for protected Areas awarded to Poloniny National Park (Slovak Republic) - to be possibly proposed by the Standing Committee to the Committee of Ministers****CM Documents****CM(2015)**

...Meeting,2015
Sustainable Development**Standing Committee to the Bern Convention**
Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas
(T-PVS/DE)

Draft Resolution CM/ResDip(2015) ...
on the withdrawal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to
the Poloniny National Park (Slovak Republic)*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on ... 2015 at the ... meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features, as amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution CM/ResDip(2012)19 on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the Poloniny National Park;

Taking into consideration the expert's report⁷ presented at the annual meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas in 2013 and the Opinion submitted the same year by the Group of Specialists to the Bureau and the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention;

Taking note of the report of the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas in 2015⁸, concluding that there had not been significant progress in adopting the measures requested in its Opinion of 2013;

Having regard to Article 8 1.c of the Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas;

Having regard to the proposals of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention;

Decides to withdraw the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the Poloniny National Park, before the end of the period of validity.

⁷ This expert's report was presented on 26 March 2013 and is available under the reference T-PVS/DE (2013) 5

⁸ This report is available under the reference T-PVS/DE (2015) 09

Opinion concerning the Poloniny National Park, adopted by the Group of Specialists at its meeting on 26 March 2013

Opinion

of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma following the extraordinary appraisal report on the Poloniny National Park

After examining the report drawn up by the independent expert following the extraordinary appraisal, the aims of which were to visit the Diploma-holding area (1) in order to analyse the difficulties encountered in implementing the conditions attached to the last renewal in 2008 and (2) to discuss the issues encountered with the local stakeholders, the Group of Experts:

1. takes note of the conclusions of the report by the independent expert and the time-frame it provides for the adoption of protective measures by national authorities;
2. notes the work being done by the National Park's staff;
3. recognises that all Diploma-holding areas should demonstrate exemplary management practices;
4. gauges the seriousness of the situation, particularly in respect of the long-term absence of a management plan for the Poloniny National Park;
5. regrets that no official response was received from the national authorities, since the time that the extraordinary appraisal took place, regarding the endorsement of a pilot-project to be developed in cooperation between the relevant Ministries (Environment, Agriculture and Land Use);
6. considers that it is appropriate for the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention to recommend to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that it requests the Slovak authorities to take the appropriate measures to implement the conditions within a period of one year; and
7. strongly advises that, if the necessary measures are not taken within the period allocated, the Standing Committee recommends the withdrawal of the European Diploma before the end of its period of validity.