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**T-PVS/PA (2014) 14**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

34<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 2-5 December 2014

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**Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts  
on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks**

*Document prepared by  
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*

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The 6th meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks was held in Strasbourg (France), on 11 and 12 September 2014.

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the meeting of Group of Experts, as well as of the progress in the implementation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest, and the Action Plan on the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network;
- Consider the draft list of proposed Emerald sites in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation and, if appropriate, nominate them officially as Candidate Emerald Sites;
- Thank the European Environment Agency and its European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity for the crucial technical and scientific support provided throughout 2014, in particular in relation to the release of the new Emerald Network Software;
- Consider the proposals for the future activities on the setting-up of the Emerald Network and the Pan-European Ecological Network, when adopting its programme of activities and budget for 2015;
- Examine and, if appropriate, adopt the following documents:
  - Draft revised Annex 1 to Resolution No. 4 (1996) listing endangered natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures;
  - Draft Recommendation interpreting certain provisions of Resolution No. 6 (1998) listing the species requiring specific habitat conservation measures.

## **1. Opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda and introduction to the mandate of the Group and meeting agenda**

The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Group of Experts, Mr. Jacques Stein, who welcomed the Contracting Parties. He underlined that this meeting is the most attended Group of Expert's meetings in the frame of the Bern Convention for 2014. Mr Eladio Fernandez-Galiano, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department, reminded that 2014 was marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launching of the Emerald Network idea, with the adoption by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention of Recommendation No. 16 in 1989. The meeting agenda was adopted without changes.

The Secretariat reminded the double mandate of the Group, (1) dealing with technical and scientific issues linked to the constitution of the Emerald Network and (2) facilitating the exchange of experiences, practices and initiatives related to the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network.

## **2. State of play of the setting-up of the Emerald Network and European Ecological Network**

Contracting Parties to the Convention presented briefly progress achieved in the field of ecological networks in their countries and in particular on the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest.

The Group agreed that the draft list of newly proposed Emerald sites from 7 countries<sup>1</sup>, available in document T-PVS/PA(2014)10 and resulting from the countries' work in 2013, will be sent for official nomination as Candidate Emerald Sites to the Standing Committee. Any objections from the concerned Parties should be received by the Secretariat by 12 October 2014.

## **3. Developing the Emerald Network and its tools and regulations**

### **3.1. New Emerald Software**

The features of the nearly final version of the new Emerald Network software were explained to the delegates. Its development was made possible after the adoption in 2013 of the revised Emerald Network Standard Data Form. The official release of the Software is expected on 19 September and is the result of the hard work and dedication of the staff of the European Environment Agency, the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, the international expert Marc Roekaerts and several Contracting Parties which have volunteered for its testing.

The delegate of Norway congratulated all involved parties for the realisation of the Software, which corresponds to their needs and wishes. The country will start using it as soon as it is released.

### **3.2. Reporting on the Emerald Network: 1<sup>st</sup> reporting format**

The Secretariat reminded that the delegate's opinions expressed on this agenda item back in 2013 were at times opposite. While some countries were in favor of a simplified exercise of reporting on solely administrative measures for the first round of reporting due in 2018, others were agreeing with the Secretariat's opinion that the reporting needs to be useful and more developed. Therefore, the first draft reporting form, document T-PVS/PA (2014)9, does not include detailed reporting requirement on the conservation status of individual species or habitats, nor reporting on distribution and population size for species and habitats.

After a debate, the Group agreed on the principle that the reporting exercise has to be useful for the countries, but also for a comparison at a pan-European level, using Natura 2000 and Emerald data. In practice the Group agreed that this should result in:

- More concrete questions and avoiding open questions;
- Report to be requested on subset of species and habitats and not on groups;
- Criteria for the choice of the subset of species and habitats to be proposed;

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<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Russian Federation

- Red List species (national or international) to be prioritised;

Finally, the Secretariat clarified that in line with the decision by the Standing Committee to the Convention in December 2013 to adopt the On-line Reporting System (ORS) used by many other MEAs on biodiversity, it is the Secretariat intention to make use of the ORS for this reporting and thus allow Contracting Parties to report on-line with the user-friendly tool.

According to the decisions and proposals from the Group, the first draft of the form will be further developed and presented to the meeting of the Group of Experts in 2015.

### **3.3. Draft Interpretative Recommendation on Resolution No. 6 (1998) – Secretariat of the Bern Convention**

The issue of interpreting the # sign marking 40 species from the list of Resolution No. 6 (1998) was on the agenda of the Group in 2013 and at the table of the 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat was thus charged to prepare a draft interpretative Recommendation on the issue, available in document T-PVS (2014)7.

The debate in the Group showed that many Contracting Parties disagree with the approach to present the use of the # sign as a “request of exceptions”. The two questions summarising the debate at the Group were why and when it is acceptable for Parties not to designate Emerald sites for certain species listed as in need for such protection. After a long discussion, delegates agreed that there should be an approved procedure allowing for an “evaluation” of countries’ considerations that some species at stake do not require a protection through an Emerald site. The use of the proposed information form for justifying the countries’ considerations was equally agreed.

The Secretariat was charged to adapt the proposed text according to the comments received and to send it out to the Parties by 19 September. Comments are expected from the Parties by 29 October, as the document will then have to be uploaded on the webpage of the 34<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, called to examine it and adopt it if appropriate.

### **3.4. Proposals for additional species to Resolution No. 6 (1998) from seven Contracting Parties and Observer States: first analysis by Catalogue of Life**

Ms Sabine Roscher, Senior officer at the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity presented the result of an initial analysis operated by the Catalogue of Life of a list of 640 taxa. These taxa form a list of possible new species, which seven countries working on the Emerald network constitution consider as suitable for adding to Resolution No. 6 (1998). The Catalogue of Life did a first screening of the taxa, checking in particular (1) whether the species name exists in any widely recognised taxonomic authority file and (2) whether the taxon name is already listed under the Bern Convention using a different name.

She further clarified why this first analysis is necessary, explaining that taxonomy is a complex area often clouded by different opinions on the validity of particular species definitions and on the correct handling of names. She stressed that names are no reliable keys on given taxa, as names are often misspelled, even in legislation. In addition, a taxon can have more than one name or one name can be used for several taxa.

Ms Roscher concluded that the result of the first screening of the list of taxa provided showed that 90% of the names included can be found in the Catalogue of Life, although incorrect spellings, problems with species authors or names without authors were encountered. The next step is for the European Topic Centre to match the taxa names with additional checklists, such as PESI, ThePlantLife, etc. The results of this endeavor will be communicated when available.

### **3.5. Revision of the lists of threatened habitats of the Emerald Network: updating Annex 1 of Resolution No. 4 (1996)**

Two parallel developments were on the agenda of the Group, both linked to the revision and update of Annex 1 to Resolution No. 4 (1996) listing endangered habitats in need of specific conservation. The first one results from the harmonisation of the lists of habitats to be protected under

the Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks, and the second one from the submission in 2014 by the Swiss and Ukrainian authorities of a total of five proposals for additional habitats to be included in Annex 1.

The Group discussed the proposed revised Annex I to Resolution No. 4 (1996) presented in document TPVS/PA(2014)12. They underlined that the proposed list resulting from the harmonisation process of the Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks is logical and the proposed way of integrating the additional habitats acceptable.

Some members of the Group have however expressed a reservation concerning two out of the four new habitat proposals by Switzerland. As explained in the analysis prepared by the ETC/BD in document PVS/PA(2014)7 and presented by Douglas Evans, Senior officer at the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity, some of the newly proposed habitats might create additional responsibilities for other countries working on the Network establishment.

As a result of the discussions on both issues, the Group agreed to forward the proposed list to the Standing Committee for official adoption, including three out of the five newly proposed habitats by Switzerland and Ukraine as new units (F7.51: Tomillars on chalk outcrops of eastern Europe; G3.43: Inner-Alpine Ononis steppe forests; G3.44: Alpine Spring heath Pinus sylvestris forests).

### **3.6. EUNIS application and Bern Convention list of threatened habitats**

Douglas Evans demonstrated the improvements made on the EUNIS application by the European Environment Agency, to better present the Bern Convention list of threatened habitats in Resolution No. 4 (1996) and using the EUNIS classification: <http://eunis.eea.europa.eu/habitats.jsp>

### **3.7. Reminder of the procedure for amending the appendices to the Bern Convention**

The Secretariat used the opportunity provided by some agenda items to remind the procedure for amending the appendices of the Bern Convention, in comparison to the procedure used for the revision and update of the lists of species and habitats targeted by the Emerald network.

The main message to the experts was that Contracting Parties to the Convention have the obligation to consider if changes/updates to the Appendices to the Convention are not desirable as well, based on similar considerations as the ones used for the revision of the lists annexed to Resolutions No. 6 (1998) and No. 4 (1996).

## **4. Enforcing the Emerald Network implementation: exchange of experiences**

Traditionally, the Group has the opportunity to hear more about experiences and practices in some of the Convention Contracting Parties, on the implementation of the Natura 2000 Network and in particular its legal implementation and administrative management and monitoring.

A very complete and informative presentation was made by Alice Naveau, lawyer at the Nature Directorate in the Wallonia Public Service in Belgium. Ms. Naveau demonstrated the different steps used by the public services in the Wallonia region of Belgium for the transposition of the Habitats Directive and its practical implementation in terms of setting-up the conservation goals for the sites, of conservation measures planning and implementation to management. Her complete presentation can be consulted [here](#).

Mr Simon Duffield from Natural England presented the experience in England on helping protected areas in managing and adapting to climate change. He first presented the findings of research on the impacts of climate change on biodiversity in PA and ecological networks and in particular on habitats. The response they have proposed in the form of Adaptation Manual was also presented, as well as the best way of using it by practitioners as well as decision-makers. His presentation can be consulted [here](#).

## **5. Managing the Emerald sites: guidelines**

The management of adopted Emerald sites becoming a pressing issue for many Contracting Parties working on the network setting-up, the Secretariat of the Convention contracted an expert for the preparation of a guidance document. Mr. Otars Opermanis, international consultant, presented

more in details the guidance paper “Towards management of Emerald sites” (T-PVS/PA (2012)8) he was in charge of, available [here](#). The main objective of the paper is to clarify the sequence of events in the constitution process of the Network to national authorities. It stresses in particular that the work on the identification of new possible Emerald sites, in particular outside areas already protected at national level, should not be constrained by the reflection on what management and conservation measures will be implemented and what that will imply for the country. The paper further provides guidance and hints on the planning of conservation objectives and measures for the Emerald sites.

Several Contracting Parties welcomed the initiative of preparing the document and expressed their assurance that it will be very useful to present it more broadly to national authorities with competence relevant for nature conservation or related sectors.

Answering a question from a delegate, the Secretariat explained that the document is not meant for official adoption by the Standing Committee to the Convention, but is one of several tools which are developed for facilitating the work at national level on the Network establishment. The Guidance document can thus be used in combination with the [European Guidelines on protected areas and Invasive Alien Species](#) or the [draft Guidelines on planning management measures for Emerald sites, including climate change adaptation and mitigation](#). In relation to the latter one, the Secretariat reminded that the document is still a draft version as comments and suggestions for improvement are still being received by the Secretariat.

## **6. European Ecological Network**

### **6.1. Implementation by Contracting Parties of Recommendation No. 25 (1991) on the conservation of natural areas outside protected areas proper**

The Secretariat recalled that the follow-up of Recommendation No. 25 from 1991 on the conservation of natural areas outside protected areas proper was proposed by the Group of Experts itself in 2013 and endorsed by the Bureau of the Convention. The exercise was aiming at facilitating the review of initiatives, projects and actions implemented at the level of all Bern Convention Contracting parties relating to integrating nature conservation to other socio-economic sectors. This review was also considered important in line with the Action Plan on the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network endorsed in 2013. Its result was meant to be used in parallel to the development of the recent initiatives of the European Union on Green Infrastructure, No Net Loss and Mapping of ecosystem services.

The Secretariat further informed that unfortunately only 7 reports were received from Contracting Parties, some of which in the form of official letters (document [T-PVS/File\(2014\)34](#)). The initial idea of preparing an analysis of the reports was therefore not achievable. On the proposal of some delegates, it was considered reasonable that a compilation of the national reports of Contracting Parties to the CBD is made and further analysed and presented to the Standing Committee meeting. The Secretariat informed that it will check the opportunity and feasibility of this option ahead of the Standing Committee meeting.

### **6.2. Presentations on projects/initiatives on the establishment of ecological networks:**

Ms Anna Kuhmonen, Project manager, Finnish Environment Institute attended the meeting and presented the outcomes of the work on the Barents Protected Area Network her institute co-implemented in the past three years. Since the first presentation of the initiative in 2011, the international team working on the project developed a map of the current and planned protected areas in the region, as well as presenting the gaps which need to be filled in in terms of new protected sites. The project included the development of recommendations based on analyses of harmonized natural and anthropogenic data covering the whole region and evaluations of the protected area system. Ms Kuhmonen further underlined the good cooperation established with the national teams working on the implementation of the Emerald Network in the countries concerned. The full presentation can be consulted [here](#).

Ms Aline Blaser, Programme Manager, Directorate General of nature and landscape of the Republic and Canton of Geneva provided information on the trans-bouder initiative implemented between two regional entities from France and Switzerland called Contracts “Biological Corridors”.

The initiative concerns the big Geneva area and aims at facilitating the movements of species in a relatively heavily fragmented urban area. Ms Blaser explained that the main challenge was and remains the involvement of all actors and sectors in the initiative and to better integrate the environmental and biological consideration into their respective action. The right assessment prior to the establishment of the contracts with the different actors is also a very important element of the initiative, in order to ensure the right actions are implemented in the right area, with the agreement of all parties concerned. Ms Blaser's presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

### **6.3. Implementation of the Action Plan on the establishment of the European Ecological Network**

Since 2013, the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) is in charge of the development of a Toolkit on the benefits of the establishment of functional ecological networks at pan-European level, targeting stakeholders and decision-makers from both national and sub-national levels. Ms Aysegul Cil, Head of Capacity Building & Stakeholders presented the nearly final version of the leaflet, which should be available for on-line consultation by the end of October 2014.

The preparation of the Toolkit was made possible thanks to the voluntary contributions from some Contracting Parties in 2013, to the implementation of the Action Plan on the development of the PEEN. The Group of Experts welcomed the development of the Leaflet and hoped it will be used and useful to Contracting Parties at national level, for engaging further various actors and sectors in nature conservation. The presentation of the Toolkit can be consulted [here](#).

## **7. Conclusions of the meeting and future work of the Group of Experts**

The Group agreed to set 16-17 September as tentative dates for its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting due in 2015 and to pursue its activities in 2015 in line with its meeting conclusions available here: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/Nature/EcoNetworks/Documents/2014/Conclusions\\_GoEPA\\_EN\\_2014.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/Nature/EcoNetworks/Documents/2014/Conclusions_GoEPA_EN_2014.pdf)



## Annex 1: Agenda

***Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> September (09h30 – 17h30)***

***11:00 – 11:20 Coffee break***

***12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break***

***15:30 – 15:50 Coffee break***

- 1. Opening of the meeting by the Chair, Mr Jacques Stein**

[T-PVS/PA(2013)14]
- 2. Adoption of the agenda**

[T-PVS/PA(2014)1]
- 3. Mandate of the Group and decisions of the 33rd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on the protection of natural habitats – Secretariat of the Bern Convention**

[T-PVS/PA(2014)3]  
[T-PVS/PA(2014)10]  
[T-PVS/PA(2014)11]
- 4. State of play of the setting-up of the Emerald Network and European Ecological Network – Progress reports by Contracting Parties**

[T-PVS/PA(2014)5]
- 5. Developing the Emerald Network and its tools and regulations**
  - 5.1 New Emerald Software: demonstration and exchange of views – Marc Roekaerts, International consultant

[T-PVS/PA(2014)6]
  - 5.2 Reporting on the Emerald Network: 1<sup>st</sup> reporting format – discussion on the features of the form – Marc Roekaerts and Secretariat of the Bern Convention

[T-PVS/PA(2014)9]
  - 5.3 Draft Interpretative Recommendation on Resolution No. 6 (1998) – Secretariat of the Bern Convention

[T-PVS(2014)7]
  - 5.4 Proposals for additional species to Resolution No. 6 (1998) from seven Contracting Parties and Observer States: first analysis by Catalogue of Life – Sabine Roscher, Senior officer, ETC/BD
  - 5.5 Harmonising the lists of threatened habitats of the Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks: revised Annex 1 of Resolution No. 4 (1996) – Douglas Evans, Senior Officer, ETC/BD

[T-PVS/PA(2013)9]  
[T-PVS/PA(2014)12]
  - 5.6 Analysis of the proposals received for additional habitats to Annex 1 to Resolution No.4 (1996) – Douglas Evans, Senior Officer, ETC/BD

[T-PVS/PA(2014)7]  
[T-PVS/PA(2014)4]  
[T-PVS/PA(2014)13]
  - 5.7 EUNIS application and Bern Convention list of threatened habitats – Douglas Evans, Senior Officer, ETC/BD
  - 5.8 Reminder of the procedure for amending the appendices to the Bern Convention – Secretariat of the Bern Convention
- 6. Enforcing the Emerald Network implementation: exchange of experiences**
  - 6.1 Case studies: National systems of management, monitoring and reporting mechanisms
    - Implementation of Natura 2000 in Wallonia (Belgium) - Alice Naveau, Jurist, Direction de la Nature, Service Public de Wallonie

- Climate Change Adaptation Manual - Simon Duffield, Natural England

## 7. Managing the Emerald sites: guidelines

7.1 Towards management of Emerald sites: Guidance document – Otars Opermanis, International consultant

[T-PVS/PA(2012)8]

7.2 Draft Guidelines on planning management measures for Emerald sites, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, revised version – Secretariat of the Bern Convention

*A dinner booking can be made at a restaurant (8pm) to help those wishing to get together in the evening. More information will be given during the meeting. Please note that this is not an invitation from the Council of Europe.*

***Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> September (09h00 – 12h30)***  
***10:30 – 10:50 Coffee break***

## 8. European Ecological Network

8.1 Implementation by Contracting Parties of Recommendation No. 25 (1991) on the conservation of natural areas outside protected areas proper – Secretariat of the Bern Convention

[T-PVS/Files(2012)34]

[Rec. No. 25(1991)]

8.2 Presentations on projects/initiatives on the establishment of ecological networks:

- Barents Protected Area Network – Anna Kuhmonen, Project manager, Finnish Environment Institute
- Contracts “Biological Corridors” in the big Geneva area – Aline Blaser, Programme Manager, Directorate General of nature and landscape, Republic and Canton of Geneva

8.3 Implementation of the Action Plan on the establishment of the European Ecological Network - Toolkit on the benefits of the establishment of ecological networks – Aysegül Cil, ECNC

## 9. Future work of the Group of Experts

9.1 Programme of activities 2015

9.2 Next meeting of the Group of Experts

## 10. Any other business

## 11. Conclusions of the meeting

## **Annex 2: List of Participants**

### **Albania / Albanie**

Apologies/excusé

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