

Resolution CM/ResDip(2018)10

on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas awarded to the natural parc of Maritime Alps (Italy)

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018
at the 1321th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year 2023/2024

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: **ITALY**

Name of the area: **ENTE GESTIONE AREE PROTETTE DELLE ALPI MARITTIME**

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

Parco Alpi Marittime was awarded the European Diploma with Parc National du Mercantour in 1993. Parco Alpi Marittime had its Diploma renewed in 2008. The verifier's visit took place on 27 and 28 June 2017. Il Diploma the European Diploma was renewed in 2018.

Central authority concerned:

Name: **Ministero dell'ambiente e della sicurezza energetica**

Direzione generale Patrimonio naturalistico e Mare

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Authority responsible for its management:

Name: **Regione Piemonte**

Ente di gestione Aree Protette delle Alpi Marittime

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¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. In the year 2024, the allocation of regional funds for the day-to-day running of the organisation stood at €589,000, that for personnel at €2,866,664. These amounts correspond to 2023. The organisation is currently stable at 59 employees, structured as shown in the attached table. In 2024, the reorganisation process that started in the second half of 2022 continued, leading to the overall recruitment of 21 new resources, with the consequent redefinition of the Protected Areas' macrostructure and a reorganisation of the offices. The presence of younger employees, although limited, is clearly increasing compared to the past: the age-groups with the highest numbers of employees are those between the ages of 41/50 and 56/60, but the age-group 28/40 has expanded considerably, reaching a share of 19% within the workforce.

In addition to its everyday running, the Park Authority continued to implement actions of various projects financed at European, national and regional level.

In October 2023, four new projects were launched, financed within the framework of the INTERREG VI-A Alcotra Italy-France 2021/2027 Programme, lasting three years, in which the Protected Areas are partners. Specifically, these are the following projects:

- "ACLIMO - Climate and water: synergies for the future between alpine parks" which aims to analyse the effects of climate change on habitats and species and sensitive to water resources, raising the population's awareness of adaptation and supporting agricultural activities, particularly pastoral ones, in the transition;
 - "BiodivTourAlps - Biodiversity and tourism: synergies for the future among alpine parks" with the aim of testing new approaches to reconcile visitor reception and the real need to preserve fragile natural habitats by improving knowledge, management and awareness of human-nature interactions;
- "COGNITIOFORT - Raising awareness of the cross-border fortified heritage and structuring the cultural offer", aimed at enhancing the cultural/touristic value of fortifications, barracks and military infrastructures in Alpine territories;
- "RivierALP: Cycling and walking between the Alps and the sea" aimed at revitalising the socio-economic fabric of the cross-border territory through proposals based on innovation in tourism.

In the first half of 2024, the activities envisaged by the four projects above were launched, specifically:

- Meetings, online and in-person, at partnership level for the coordination of the projects and the activities envisaged by them (COPIL, CODIR, working groups), as well as for the exchange of experiences and good practices;
- Internal meetings, online and in-presence, for the definition and implementation of the concrete actions foreseen by the projects;
- Stipulation of agreements to carry out research activities with the University of Turin, the Polytechnic of Turin and CIPRA Italy in the framework of the 'ACLIMO' and 'BiodivTourAlps' projects;
- Participation in conferences and festivals related to the mountain world, in order to disseminate the themes and reflections arising from the 'ACLIMO' and 'BiodivTourAlps' projects;
- Production of 8 mini-videos promoting good pastoral practices in the field of water resource management in the cross-border area, within the framework of the 'ACLIMO' project;

The second half of 2024 saw the continuation of the above and the implementation of further activities:

- Sampling and data collection related to the research activities financed within the 'ACLIMO' and 'BiodivTourAlps' projects;
- Nature and awareness-raising events for responsible use of the Alpine protected areas, both in the municipalities of the protected areas and in the mountain huts at high altitudes;
- Installation of a water storage tank to serve the Don Barbera refuge in the municipality of Briga Alta (CN), as part of the 'BiodivTourAlps' project;
- Initiation of collaborations with professional training organisations and the Collegio delle Guide Alpine del Piemonte (mountain guides organisation) to train outdoor professionals (e.g. nature guides) in the correct use of protected and natural areas in general, within the framework of 'BiodivTourAlps'.

The LIFE18 NAT/IT/000972 LIFE WOLFALPS EU project activities of which the Park Authority was the coordinating beneficiary were concluded in 2024. The project implemented actions aimed at fostering coexistence between the wolf (*Canis lupus*) and human activities in the Alpine environment, with important communication and awareness-raising actions for different targets. The project involved 20 partners: 14 Italian, 2 French, 2 Austrian and 2 Slovenian and over 100 supporters. The study area is the entire Alpine region. In May 2024, the final project conference was held in Trento, at which the results were presented. The five-year project ended on 30 September 2024.

In 2023, the Protected Areas collaborated with other bodies at cross-border level to draw up an Integrated Territorial Plan (PITER+) to be applied for under the VI-A Alcotra Italy-France 2021/2027 Programme. In 2024, the Integrated Territorial Strategy and the Coordination and Communication Project (PCC ALPIMED PILOT) of the PITER+ ALPIMED+ project were presented and approved. To complete the Plan, two individual projects are in the application phase, namely:

- PITER+ ALPIMED+ ECOTOUR, which has the overall objective of promoting the Mediterranean Alps as a destination, creating an integrated, resilient and sustainable socio-economic model and strengthening innovative cross-border networks with a focus on the city-mountain link;
- PITER+ ALPIMED+ ECOTERR, which has the overall objective of implementing a sustainable model for the management and protection of natural resources, supporting the ecosystem services provided by nature, the resilience and connectivity of the cross-border territory and promoting circular economy actions.

At national level, the organisation also participated in the EXPLORA call, issued by the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo, which provided the opportunity to participate in three projects, two as partners and one as lead partner, which received funding. The 'Bin n'tel bosc' (Well in the wood) project trained twenty guides in forest immersion experiences (including four Park Guides and three employees) and, subsequently, accompanied over 500 people into the forest, including young people (1st and 2nd grade secondary schools) and groups of mentally and physically disabled people.

The Authority is the leader of the 'Butterfly Effect' project which, saw the full completion of educational activities in 2024: excursions in the protected area with the main focus on butterfly observation as an element of environmental monitoring, bicycle rides to educate on sustainable mobility, use of the iNaturalist app to include observations in the Authority's citizen science project. The project, aimed at schools and groups of children and young people included in summer entertainment programmes, involved a total of around 500 participants.

Lastly, the 'Open' project was delayed, mainly due to the bad weather that affected the scheduled field trips and was therefore granted an extension: it will end in May 2025.

In 2024, the organisation repropoed the 'Bin n'tel bosc' project for a new call by Fondazione CRC, 'Committed to rights', which involves the National Health Service and aims to: broaden the base of forest guides, deepen the skills of forest therapy operators with the acquisition of knowledge and techniques (through theoretical-practical workshops, FAD training, peer learning) that will subsequently be put into practice for the benefit of the blind and elderly. The project, which is complemented by advocacy activities aimed at local administrators and decision-makers (e.g. the 'Bin n'tel bosc' day on 15 November 2024), has been funded and is currently underway.

The Nature Plan of the Maritime Alps Park is currently being drafted, while the two management plans for the Natura 2000 sites, Oasi di Crava Morozzo and Alpi Marittime have been defined and adopted. The project, financed by the Local Development Plan of the LAG Tradizione delle Terre Occitane, to create a path for disabled visitors in the Ciciu del Villar Reserve was completed.

With reference to the 2021-2027 ERDF Regional Programme, the administrative procedures have been defined for awarding contracts for the two projects, one in the Marguareis Park and the other in the Alpi Marittime Park, which envisage hydrogeological improvements of unstable sites. As far as the Marguareis Park is concerned, the work has been contracted out.

Within the framework of the same programme, two other projects were presented in November, one in Valle Pesio (Marguareis Park) for the restoration of a forest track, and one in Valle Gesso (Alpi Marittime Park) for the reconstruction of the path to the Genova refuge, which was devastated by the storm Aline.

In 2024, the research project carried out in collaboration with three US universities continued. The project involves (Amherst College, University of Virginia, University of Maryland), and is entitled 'Resistance Variation to Endemic Diseases as a Risk Factor of New Disease Emergence: Anther Smut as a Model'. This project gives continuity to studies on resistance and susceptibility relationships and co-evolution processes existing between host plants (with endemic or cosmopolitan species) and pathogenic fungi, agents of infectious diseases, in natural or ex situ (laboratory and nursery) settings.

This project and others on a smaller scale financed within the framework of the Rural Development Plan have enabled the organisation to conduct habitat and species conservation actions.

The activity of the Reference Centres that Piedmont Region has identified in the Aree Protette delle Alpi Marittime continued in 2023.

- Centro Biodiversità Vegetale

Monitoring and conservation activities of habitats and plant species were carried out by the Centre, also thanks to the help of the Germplasm Bank. 2023 saw the start of long-term monitoring of some habitats through permanent plots and the start of specific counting for some new species, e.g. *Gladiolus palustris*. The management of the 'Bicknell' Alpine Botanical Station, the 'Valderia' Alpine Botanical Garden and the

'Mattiolo' Phytoalimurgical Garden continued. The 'Prà da Smens' project was also further pursued to encourage the use of local seeds for environmental recovery. Also, the local eradication of some invasive exotic species that are particularly dangerous to native habitats was carried out, in particular the removal of the recently found *Sicyos angulatus* in the Crava-Morozzo Reserve. Restoration of four wetland areas were planned after the funding of the project ToBio, but the main field activities only began in 2024.

- Large Carnivores Centre

The Centre led and coordinated at regional and international level the activities related to the LIFE18 NAT/IT/000972 LIFE WOLFALPS EU project, which ended in September 2024. It will continue to coordinate the main activities developed in the LIFE project into the After LIFE programme at regional level: monitoring the wolf population, activities of the emergency response teams to support livestock farmers, the communication and information activities on large carnivores and the fight against poaching with the Anti-poison Dog Units. The Centre has supported the activities of Piedmont Region and all the other Protected Areas in Piedmont.

- Vultures and Raptors Centre

Activities related to the monitoring of the bearded vulture in Piedmont were followed up through the Regional Observatory Network and the griffon vulture monitoring project continued. The Centre coordinated the monitoring of migratory raptors as part of the Migrans Project, as is routine.

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. Three years have passed since the signing of the Quirinal Treaty between the French Republic and the Italian Republic, the basis for enhanced cooperation between the neighbouring regions of Piedmont, Liguria and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. One of the founding elements of the future organisation of the territory is the creation of an international Alpi-Maritime-Mercantour park, this has been reaffirmed on several occasions. This emerged, for example, at the conference 'Italy-France border: obstacle or opportunity', held in Turin on 26 November, and at the signing of the Declaration of Intent for the creation of the Southern Alps cross-border alliance, at the end of a meeting between local administrators held in Nice on 29 November. These are important pronouncements moving in a positive direction towards the creation of Alpi Maritime National Park by the Italian state, an obligatory step for the future establishment of a protected area of international standing.

2. The areas remain under the management of the organisation to this day. No new developments have taken place during 2024. We are waiting for the eventual transition to National Park status in order to define the status of the various Managed Reserves.

3. In 2024, Regional Law 19 of 29/06/2009 on the Piedmont System of Protected Areas underwent a slight modification, limited to the procedure for the nomination of representatives of environmental and agricultural associations to the boards of directors of the Protected Area management bodies: the nomination is now direct, while previously it was the responsibility of the Park Community, on the basis of the nominations made.

Piedmont Region is still in the process of approving the Regulations for the Protected Areas managed by the Authority.

4. The Alpi-Maritime Protected Areas and the Mercantour National Park have maintained a high level of cooperation. They are jointly carrying out a number of projects financed under the VI-A Alcotra Italy-France 2021/2027 programme mentioned above.

In the field of tourism, after having obtained the renewal of the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism at the end of 2023, they are proceeding with the implementation of the contents of the Joint Strategy and the Joint Action Plan, which includes numerous cross-border actions.

In 2024, the EGTC Alpi Marittime Mercantour European Park celebrated its tenth anniversary. During a ceremony held on 10 April at the Palazzo della Provincia di Cuneo, the administrators and directors of the Mercantour National Park and of the Alpi Marittime Protected Areas Management Authority reaffirmed the value of cross-border cooperation, which in the last ten years alone has allowed the realisation of thirty projects, with total investments in the territory exceeding thirty million euros.

In July, for the European GreenWeek 2024, the EGTC organised a cross-border event held at the Garelli Refuge, in the Marguareis Park. The event involved staff of the two parks and partners of the 'ACLIMO' and 'BidivTourAlps' projects.

Regarding the International Park project, please refer to the previous section of this document.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

No changes have occurred since the date of the last Annual Report in relation to the areas covered by the European Diploma. Since July 2018, Piedmont Region has assigned the management of several SACs, SCIs, SPAs of the Natura 2000 Network to the Authority, so the total area managed exceeds 100,000 hectares.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

No boundary changes have been made since the date of the last Annual Report. At the end of 2023, the municipality of Roccaforte Mondovì submitted a request to include part of its territory within the Marguareis Park. At present, Piedmont Region has not expressed an opinion on this.

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. Staff organisation chart
- 2. Management structure chart
- 3. Unified Programming Document 2024
- 4. Activity report 2023
- 5. CETS - Strategy 2023-2027
- 6. CETS - Action Plan 2023-2027
- 7. Cross-border cooperation article 1
- 8. Cross-border cooperation article 2

The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
 - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
 - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
 - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
 - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

- 10.1. Improvements made
 - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 10.1.5. Waste management
 - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
 - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas