

EUROPEAN DIPLOMA HOLDING SITE

**IPOLYTARNOC FOSSILS
NATURE CONSERVATION AREA**

HUNGARY

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

FOR THE PERIOD

DECEMBER 1. 2019 - NOVEMBER 30. 2020

**with an outlook to the recommendations of the Resolution
CM/ResDip(2020)9**



State/Country : H U N G A R Y

The Protected Area:

Name: Ipolytarnoc Fossils Nature Conservation Area

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Year of the award/Year of the last renewal/ Year until the award is renewed: 1995/2020/2030

Central authority concerned:

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Authority responsible for its management:

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0. Preface:

The European Diploma to the Ipolytarnóc Fossils was valid until 11 September 2020 by the Resolution CM/ResDip(2010)15, which reward was later extended on 23September 2020 by the Committee of Ministers until 11 September 2030, through the Resolution CM/ResDip(2020)9. Although this annual report should only focus on the implementation of the conditions and/or recommendations set in the previous Resolution, we enlist the newest recommendations as well because of they are valid since the end of September of this mixed year.

1. Conditions:

The Resolutions on the reward and renewal of the European Diploma to the Ipolytarnóc Fossils EDPA luckily never contained specified conditions.

2. Recommendations:

The Resolution CM/ResDip(2010)15 attached the following 5 recommendations to the renewal:

I.. Recognizing the site's high potential for further discoveries of geological interest, research – especially the palaeontological excavations – should continue; all appropriate measures should be taken to preserve and, if possible, exhibit the natural resources; the results of scientific research should be made publicly available;

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

Research on the fossil footprints on the geological study trail has been going on, more than 40 vertebrate taxa have been identified so far, some of them on species level. 3D laser scanning was introduced and a new Interreg project has a goal to digitize the footprint surfaces of the excavated areas.

Systematic brand management continued to market as geotourism destination the site, unfortunately the covid-19 pandemic caused decline in our progress. To interpret the new discoveries of the Miocene habitat 3 new animations were created for the holographic projection at the Great Conservation Hall of the geological trail.

The GUIDE@HAND smart phone application is further expanding and available in Slovak and English languages as well in offline format on several study-trails. AR technology focusing on the Miocene habitat and Oculus VR bird-eye view of the site was introduced in the visitor centre this year.

II. The site should take an active role in the management of the Slovak-Hungarian transborder Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark, in order to preserve and interpret the natural assets of the region and to become a focal, multilingual information point for geotourism;

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

As the main gateway to the Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark, Ipolytarnoc promotes the geological heritage preservation of the region and advocates its resources to the visitors during special events, like the usual Geopark Week at the turn of May and provides exhibition place to the Geopark. Unfortunately due to the covid-19 pandemic regulations the early spring and late autumn geotourism activities had to go online, we had to lock the site during these times and only from late spring to middle fall could we operate as usual, Geopark programs were partly postponed or cancelled like the crossborder thematic guided tours to the tree-cave geosite on the Slovak side from our visitor centre.

The BNPD and the Geopark has a revised cooperation agreement, the BNPD delegate (the leader of Ipolytarnoc Fossils, who is the member of the EGN Coordination Committee) has an influence in the international affairs of the Geopark, yet the recent management structure of the geopark still excludes the nature conservation agencies in both countries. Including the local government of Nograd county and Salgotarjan town county seat advanced investigation and further consultations started about this issue.

III. The entrance to the protected area should have an appropriate gateway displaying information in order to control tourism within the site and the buffer zone; the buildings along the geological trail should be further integrated into the landscape; the power line that runs between the village and the visitor centre should be replaced with an underground cable;

Action taken by the site to comply with the new recommendation:

Information panels got emplaced in front of the visitor center and at the border of Ipolytarnóc settlement, QR codes are used in some places beside the more widespread texts of Hungarian, Slovak and English languages.

Luckily the buildings of the last 15 years well-fit in their surroundings, at the visitor center earthen cover was used, the temporary shelter protecting the new excavation and the chosen new roof cover of the protective cellar are good examples of these efforts. Unfortunately though, partly because of fire-protection restrictions, solutions for vegetation cover of the 40-26 year-old, buildings is very limited, they cannot be properly blended into the landscape in their recent conditions. An INTERREG EU funded project reached its planning stage, which rebuilds the roof-cover of the worn-out 2. conservation building on the geotrail. This project started just on November this year and will take 2 years to finish it.

To control geo-tourism and lessen environmental impact on the EDPA it would be ideal to relocate the visitor reception facilities to the borderline, between the village and the protected area, these project proposals have failed so far. The same failure applies to the power line's replacement, nevertheless a project plan focuses on underground cable laying. The BNPD is constantly applying and lobbying for funds to achieve these goals.

IV. The gradual replacement of the exotic trees with indigenous species should be continued by assisting the natural succession process through ecologically sensitive land management practices; the control of game – causing considerable damage to vegetation and protected animal species – should be continued;

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

The 8 acre-large forestry activity continued on the rehabilitation of old orchards, enhanced the spreading of indigenous tree species and suppressed exotic species, including the

elimination of invasive ragweed this year. Sensitive game management is an ongoing activity throughout the year, the ranger of the site is responsible for it with the assistance of the staff of the BNPD headquarters. The African swine fever causes some difficulties in the management of the wild boar population and a game-refrigerating container would-be useful to temporarily store shot game within the site.

V. The balance between open spaces and wooded areas on the western side of the conservation area, close to the nearby settlement, should be maintained to preserve the mosaic structure of the landscapes there;

Action taken by the site to comply with the recommendation:

There are only two racka sheep grazing close to the trailhead of the geological study path, at the buffer zone, where the meadows are leased to local farmers, grazing, hay cutting and bailing activities are going on a larger scale. In the meadows of the border zone the pine tree and acacia spreading have been suppressed by the help of a local TETT NGO.

Tree thinning on forest edges has maintained the mixed vegetation cover of the landscape. Around buildings of the geological trail acacia has been suppressed.

Since 23 September 2020 the Resolution CM/ResDip(2020)9 attaches the following 12 recommendations to the renewal, the number of the recommendations we have to comply with are more than doubled:

1. further explore the site's high potential for geological discoveries, especially palaeontological excavations. It would be of significant added value if further promotion of internationalisation of research activities took place by making the results of scientific research publicly available;
2. take all appropriate measures to preserve and, if possible, exhibit the site's geological and palaeontological resources. By 2025, engage in a careful (ensuring maximum respect of geological and palaeontological features) renovation/replacement of buildings, primarily the exhibition halls along the geological trail. Additionally, renovate the visitors' centre and other visitors' facilities during the renewal period of ten years;
3. further explore the possibilities of the site taking a central and active role in the integration in the Slovak-Hungarian trans-border Nógrád-Novohrad Geopark, in order to preserve and raise awareness about the natural assets of the region and to further develop the multilingual information point for geo-tourism;
4. continue the gradual replacement of non-native tree species, in particular Robinia pseudoacacia and regionally non-native Pinus species with native deciduous tree species (for example, Quercus) by assisting the natural succession process through ecologically sensitive land management practices. Also take measures to control herbal invasive alien species such as Ambrosia artemisiifolia. Continue the control of game which is causing considerable damage to vegetation and protected animal species;
5. maintain the balance between open spaces and wooded areas on the western side of the conservation area, close to the nearby settlement, to preserve the mosaic structure of the landscapes there. Maintain the use of the regional breed/landrace of Racka sheep because of its added value from a historical husbandry point of view, and also to increase structural diversity in the herb-dominated vegetation. For agropastoral reasons, maintaining hay-cutting by local farmers and/or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should be encouraged. Limiting management of open habitats to the use of sheep grazing alone would change the landscape into a mosaic of patches covered in woody and herbal plant communities (so-called woodland), which would not comply with earlier recommendations (2010);
6. replace the power line that runs between the village and the visitors' centre by an underground structure, respecting the current landscape and exhibitions;
7. explore the feasibility of a video presentation, or documentary film on the scientific, evidence-based process of palaeontological science (paleotaxonomy as well as paleoecology and ecosystem reconstruction/restoration). In particular, the palaeontological method which reconstructs whole animals based on "simple" footprints is astonishing and will interest the general public and scientists in other life sciences;
8. as is already done in the rock park, install more visual markers that make links between present and past (Miocene) ecosystems;

9. improve documentation/reporting on the results of management measures through structured monitoring, as well as of public response (numbers of visitors, appreciation), etc;
10. further enlarge local, regional and transnational public involvement and administrative co-operation, for example on the Novohrad - Nógrád transnational Geopark (to be undertaken by the Bükk National Park authorities rather than the Ipolytarnóc management);
11. consider citizen science projects in order to strengthen involvement and engagement of non-scientific stakeholders;
12. continue to make good and systematic use of the logo and slogan of the European Diploma.

These recommendations have been studied in late September and since October we use as guidelines all of them.

3. Site Management:

The BNPD provides leadership and specialists' expertise from the Headquarters to the site. The BNPD with the help of a local NGO (TETT Foundation) employs the workers, there are no changes since last year.

4. Boundaries:

The area has fixed boundaries, its constant buffer and core zones are well defined.

5. Other information:

The covid-19 pandemic caused some problems in the management, financial stability and self-maintenance of the site. The Hungarian government started to review the Tentative List of the World Heritage Sites in Hungary, the Ipolytarnoc Fossils EDPA is involved in this revalidation.

The significance of the European Diploma is well recognized. The logo of the Diploma is on all the publications, road signs and panels of the Ipolytarnóc Fossils, a flag with the Diploma emblem is in front of the Visitor Centre, the visibility is well maintained.

The media attention was enormous on the renewal of the European Diploma.



Miocene animal's holographic interpretation in the conservation hall



The staff of Ipolytarnoc EDPA in the time of the covid-19 pandemic