

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2018)21
on the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas of National park of Thayatal
(Austria)**

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

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year 2025

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: Austria

Name of the area: Thayatal National Park

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

Year or renewal: 2018, Years since renewal: 7

Central authority concerned:

Name: Land Niederösterreich (Federal Government of Lower Austria)

Department of Nature Protection

Address: A-3109 St. Pölten, Landhausplatz 1

Tel: 0043 2742 9005 14243

Fax: 0043 2742 9005 15220

e-mail: post.ru5@noel.gv.at

www: www.noe.gv.at

Authority responsible for its management:

Name: Nationalpark Thayatal GmbH (Ltd.)

Address: Nationalparkhaus, Merkersdorf 90, 2082 Hardegg, Austria

Tel: 0043 2949 7005 0

Fax: 0043 2949 7005-50

e-mail: office@np-thayatal.at

www: www.np-thayatal.at

¹ As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

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.

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| N/A |
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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. set the minimum flow in the river Thaya/Dyje at as large a level as possible; the present minimum levels of 2.8 m³/sec (summer) and 3.3 m³/sec (winter) should be maintained or increased and 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 (Czech Republic), the E.ON Company and the relevant agencies of national, regional and local government;

Ad. 1 The long-term agreement of minimum flows of 2.8 m³/sec (summer) and 3.3 m³/s (winter) with the operator of the Vranov Dam “e.on” is being maintained. In 2025 there wasn’t an absolute necessity to decrease the flow to lower levels and therefore the agreement was adhered to. The hydrological situation in 2025 allowed generally higher flow rates almost throughout the entire year.

2. pursue efforts to bring the river into “good ecological potential” according to the EU’s 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;

Ad. 2 Along the River Thaya dead wood is regularly monitored in cooperation with Masaryk University in Brno. All changes support improvement of the ecological state of the river. Thayatal National Park is a strategic partner of the INTERREG project “KlimAdapt-Thaya/Dyje” led by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences. The Thayatal National Park thereby supports studies, management proposals and measures as part of the KlimAdapt-Thaya/Dyje project that lead to an ecological improvement in water flow, especially in dry periods. Between 14.10.2024 and 16.10.2024, electrofishing was carried out along the Thaya by a fish ecologist to check the reproduction of Danube brown trout and to evaluate the stocking measures for the future. The results were rather positive stating that a comparison of the 2024 fish survey with earlier data (Spindler 2000 & 2007) shows a clear improvement in the fish community. Brown trout biomass increased from 47.73 kg/ha (2007) to 111.6 kg/ha (2024), and overall fish biomass from 63 kg/ha to 119.1 kg/ha. Brown trout abundance nearly doubled, while the decline in total individuals/ha is solely due to a strong reduction in bullhead numbers. Species richness increased from 8 to 9 species.

Length-frequency analyses show that natural reproduction of brown trout was almost absent in 2000 and 2007, and no adult trout >320 mm were present in 2007. In 2024, the population structure has fully recovered, with a strong 0+ cohort, all age classes present, and adults up to 470 mm. Only very few hatchery fish were detected, indicating a largely natural population.

High habitat quality—abundant deadwood, intact banks, and extensive *Ranunculus fluitans* stands—supports this positive development. Artificial spawning grounds continue to function well, and coexistence with predators (otter, cormorant) is ensured due to structural diversity.

It should also be considered whether the site is better classified as “Metarhithral” rather than “Epipotamal (medium)”, as the latter type cannot realistically be met under the current conditions.

3. avoid strong surges of water as far as possible, consistent with the safe operation of the Vranov Hydroelectric Plant; every effort should be made by the operators of the Vranov Dam to flatten out the peaks by more gradual build-up to higher flow rates, instead of sharp peaks in the flow rate;

Ad. 3 This year the hydrological situation allowed the Vranov Dam to operate accordingly to the agreement and also to provide mostly higher flow rates and therefore sharp peaks were very rare.

4. monitor periodically the fish stocks in the river by the national park authorities, in co-operation 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;

Ad 4. An electrofishing survey to investigate the reproduction of the trout introduced took place between October 14th 2024 and October 16th 2024. Genetic analyses confirm that past stocking had no effect; therefore, stocking should be discontinued, and a zero-stocking policy for Fishery District II from 2026 is recommended. A corresponding application for zero stocking will be submitted by the Thayatal National Park to the responsible authority for 2026. The results of the study will be published online on parcs.at, an open platform for research papers concerning Austrian National Parks.

5. set up, in liaison with the Podyjí National Park, a programme for minimising fishing in the Thaya/Dyje River, with the ultimate goal of ending fishing activities there;

Ad 5. In 2025 a breeding couple of white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) on the Austrian side of the river Thaya led to a ban on fishing in the relevant section of the river on the Czech side. Artificial fish stocking was not carried out in this section in 2025 either. In a joint effort data on stocking and fishing is collected to plan further measures in accordance with the recommendations.

6. evaluate the existing agreement on co-operation between the Podyjí and Thayatal National Parks in view of a possible twinning agreement.

Ad 6. Cooperation is based on the Declaration on cooperation between Podyjí National Park (Czech Republic) and Thayatal National Park (Republic of Austria) between Czech and Lower Austrian ministry of environment. The Agreement on Common Objectives, Sources and Basic Principles of the Management in the NP Podyjí-Thayatal was evaluated and renewed on 20th October 2021. The Agreement on the mutual exchange of data from information systems from 2002 still works. New rules for cooperation are included in the joint management-concept from 2023. Regular meetings between the management teams of Thayatal and Podyjí National Parks continued as per the established agreement. We cooperate intensively on cross-border projects. As part of the BioReMo project (Interreg ATCZ: ATCZ00178) approved last year we are preparing a joint database of plant and animal species, usable not only for the Podyjí and Thayatal NPs, but for all data collectors and users in the Czech Republic and Austria. Furthermore we are working on joint monitoring protocols to strengthen the joint monitoring efforts and generate comparable data on our biodiversity research. We also cooperate on other projects; for example, as part of the Brücke Dyje project (Interreg ATCZ: ATCZ00096), the construction of a new cross-border pedestrian bridge near Hardegg is being prepared, which will be built next year.

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. The management of the Nationalpark Thayatal continues in accordance with the annual plans that are derived from the longer-range management plans. From 2021 till 2030 a new management plan has come in effect legally binding after it was unanimously decided by the advisory board.

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 changes since the European Diploma was renewed in July 2018

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.

None

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

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