

Résolution CM/ResDip(2008)1  
concernant le règlement révisé du Diplôme européen des espaces protégés

*(adoptée par le Comité des Ministres le 20 février 2008, lors de la 1018e réunion des Délégués des Ministres)<sup>1</sup>*

Annexe 5: Plan type pour les rapports annuels

Rapport annuel pour l'année 2020

Country: ITALY

Site name: GRAN PARADISO NATIONAL PARK

Année et nombre d'années depuis l'octroi ou le renouvellement du Diplôme européen des espaces protégés: 2006 - 2016

Autorité centrale concernée:

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<sup>1</sup> Telle qu'amendée par la Résolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 le 2 juillet 2014, lors de la 1204e réunion des Délégués des Ministres.

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. *Management plan:*

The management plan of the Gran Paradiso National Park (GPNP) was finally approved by the two regions in 2019 and it is therefore effective and applied. This plan contains the maps that represent the different areas subject to different protection constraints: these areas are now applied. In the winter of 2020, some meetings will be held with local farmers to verify the problems related to the full application of the maximum protection areas (Areas "A"), in which even the grazing (by domestic herbivores) activities are prohibited. The rule book of the Plan will be approved by the Park Council in December 2020.

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. *Ensure that funding is primarily provided by the state, regions and provinces, and adequately integrates other sources of funding:*

In the last years, the GPNP received ordinary state contributions ranging between € 5.834.794,65 (in 2017) and 12.635.667 (in 2019) (Tab. 1). This means an average annual contribution of € 9.103.122,20 with variations of ± € 2.101.463,63 (St.Dev.).

In 2019 the Park Total income was € 12.635.667, while in 2020 it was € 7.691.784. Other funding are supplied on specific projects from the Valle d'Aosta and Piedmont regions. European Union financed some projects in which the GPNP participated as a partner with Interreg-Alcotra and Life Program.

The comparison between total income (ordinary contribution and European fundings) and expenses is shown in the following table. The personnel costs amount between the 38 to 49% of total expenses.

Year	Total Incomes	Total expenditures	Personnel expenditures
2016	7980256	7973953	3905116
2017	9450911	9432484	3605652
2018	7756993	7676284	3595045
2019	12635667	8294777	3672723
2020	7691784	6627204	2982179

The resources of the Park are sufficient to cover management costs and therefore to maintain a high conservation level of the GPNP. Most of the personnel expenses are due to the costs of the Park rangers, who now represent over 57% of the Park staff. Park rangers are mainly employed in land protection.

However, some active conservation actions and important works for restoring the integrity of some habitats cannot be financed only with state contributions. To carry out these actions GPNP mainly used European funds. Environmental monitoring actions are carried out by internal staff (officials and rangers) while a minimum part of the annual budget (0,012%) is dedicated to scientific research, carried out by researchers not belonging to the Park.

A significant part of the funds coming from the Italian Ministry of the Environment was allocated to local community for implementing development actions compatible with the preservation of the integrity of protected ecosystems.

2. *Provide the national park with adequate staff at the executive level to enable the director to focus on key tasks, including strategic:*

The GPNP's staff reaches, in the past, 88 units. Nowadays, the Park staff consists of 73 units. This means that approximately 14% of the planned units are currently not in service. This reduction is largely due to the retirement of part of the employees. At present, it was not yet possible to replace these personnel, mainly due to turnover block imposed by the Italian Ministry. If this trend was confirmed in the next few years, the GPNP may no longer be able to carry out its institutional functions, in particular the land surveillance.

The division between the different functions and tasks is as follows:

- Direction: 1 director;
- Park rangers: 47 rangers, out of 60 indicated in the planned stuffing;
- Technical and planning office: 6 employees (4 architects, 1 surveyor and 1 worker);
- Biodiversity and Scientific research office: 1 veterinarian, 1 biologist, 1 botanist out of 4;
- General affairs: 10 office worker, out of 11;
- Administrative sector: 7 office workers.

N. 12 other people are employed in the GPNP Visitor Centers, but these are not part of the official Park staff, as they are temporary workers.

The current organic structure will have to be significantly increased in the future, to allow the director to devote more time to the elaboration of suitable conservation strategies and to activate active monitoring and conservation plans and projects.

3. *Actively defend the role and the importance of the nature and landscape conservation inside the urbanization plans and management decisions:*

Anthropogenic interventions, especially infrastructures, are very reduced in the GPNP as, of the 13 Park municipalities, only one is entirely inside the Park. The others municipalities share with the Park a more or less reduced part of their settlements, given that the Park boundaries are placed above 1000 m of altitude, therefore they include mainly non-urbanized and uninhabited areas. Thanks to Park orography, lacking in flat areas with wide woody slopes, urban development tend to be concentrated in the bottom of the valleys, around the historical settlements.

Many municipalities have specific urbanization plans for the historical cores. With the approval of the Park management Plan, the relationship between the management choices of the municipalities and those of the protected area will be even clearer thanks to the inclusion of the rules of the Park Plan within local planning, as required by the national law on protected areas.

Specifically, these regulations concern in particular the methods of recovery and conservation of the historical, cultural and landscape heritage.

Buildings dedicated to tourism are generally concentrated in the inhabited centres; some huts and a road at a high altitude involve flow concentrations in summer months that locally create some conservation problems. The main problem is to limit the flow of motorized vehicles at high altitudes: the proposed solutions are to ban the use of these vehicles in limited summer periods and to encourage the use of electric vehicles. An agreement with the local communities has not yet been found, with the aim of definitively closing the traffic of vehicles with internal combustion engines: meetings on this topics will start again next summer.

#### 4. *Integrate the values of forests as ecosystems in the development of forest management plans:*

The Park land is covered for about 22% by woods, including bushes and pioneer woods of invasion, which see a clear prevalence of larch trees. Most of the stands have no longer been managed for decades or with limited uses and this is associated with the abandonment of pastures and ancient cultivated areas, which have led to the expansion of pioneer species.

About wood management, in the Park there are some publicly owned areas for which management plans have been drawn up, mostly in north side of the Park (Aosta Valley). These management plans were implemented far below forecasts.

The Park Plan identifies naturalistic silviculture as a management principle aimed at the conservation of forest habitats. The Park Plan also includes the Management Plan of the Site of Community Interest IT1201000 which provides for conservation measures for all forest habitats and specific measures for forest habitats of Directive 92/43 / EEC. Finally, it should be emphasized that, in the Park Plan, important forest areas have been identified, in which active management is totally excluded, to allow the forest to follow an autonomous evolutionary dynamic.

#### 5. *Pursuing the search for compatibility and synergies between farming and preservation of biological diversity:*

In the last 20 years farming activities progressively reduced. Currently inside the GPNP there are very few professional breeders, mostly devoted to cattle breeding, for the production of milk (for producing typical local cheese) and meat: most farms are managed part-time. Although the percentage of people employed in agriculture is very low (3.5%, while in industry it is 35%, 55.6% of people are employed in the tertiary sector) the impact of domestic grazing is far from irrelevant: this is due to the fact that on the alpine pastures of the Park the transhumance of the herds and flocks is important, mainly during the summer. This is the reason why, for some years the Park carried out research on the impact of domestic grazing on animal biodiversity (Ministerial Project for Monitoring Animal Biodiversity) that will be fundamental for the management of these activities in all the territories that belong to the Park or that the park rents in order to preserve biological diversity. The monitoring project on animal biodiversity, started in 2006, was shared with 4 other mountain national parks: this survey network will allow to increase useful data for the management of high mountain open areas. Apart from domestic grazing, agricultural activities are practically absent in the Park.

6. *Avoiding new water abstraction projects for electrical generation, except micro-centrals licensed by the National park:*

The territory of the Park (mainly the southern side) is characterized by the presence of important water collection infrastructures (dams and complex and multiple collection sites) for the purpose of energetic production. Most of these infrastructure were planned and approved before the establishment of the Park. These dams, and the relative power lines, produce impacts on the landscape. The territory of the Park is also characterized by hydrogeological upheavals that mainly affects the torrential parts of the bottom of the valleys: these events are due to the geological characteristics of this area. In some districts, the dams, built before the establishment of the Park, represent a form of mitigation of the effects of such extreme events. These mitigation effects are mainly connected with the conservation of the fish fauna which, in the southern slope of the GPNP, is present with better distributed and more abundant populations. Among these populations are also included the populations of marble trout recently found in a secondary stream, a tributary of the Orco torrent (Noasca, Turin). To minimize the consequences of water withdrawals, a careful monitoring is carried out by the Park and any other new project of dam building is banned by the Park. After the approval of the Park Management Plan, only the small water withdrawals, only for local energetic purpose, can be authorized.

7. *Establishing a scientific advisory council to allow the scientific community to influence the Park management guidelines:*

The National Law on Parks (Law n.394 / 91) does not provide and does not allow the establishment of a scientific advising commission. Nonetheless, the GPNP has, for many years, established scientific relations with Italian and foreign universities, in order to implement research projects useful for guiding the conservation of the protected area. In 2019, with the nomination of a new director, a selection was made to identify some university researchers who were able - and available - to participate in a scientific commission. This commission will not express binding opinions on the choices made by the Park Council, but will have the main purpose of addressing monitoring planes and researches, in order to obtain results useful for conservation.

Unfortunately, in the spring of 2020, the Park director left his job and, as a result, the scientific commission was not activated. The identification of the members of the Commission will be postponed after the appointment of the new director (probably in spring 2021).

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 to the European Diploma holding site management were recorded, in relation to terrestrial and aquatic environments. The same applies to financial contributions that are sufficient to achieve the Park's conservation objectives. About the Park staff, there was a reduction in the number of Park rangers, due to the sharp reduction in turnover, imposed by the last Italian governments. However, this reduction, linked to the retirement of many old rangers, did not affect, till now, the functioning of the Ranger service, allowing the continuation of the long historical series of wild ungulates census (Alpine ibex and chamois) and of the environmental and wildlife monitoring planes, indispensable for a good conservation policy.

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 border changes were made in the last year (2019) and no changes are planned for the next years.

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.*

We would like to emphasize the importance of the role played by scientific research within the GPNP, in particular of the studies carried out over the long term in study areas and with methodologies that are always the same over time.

These long-term studies concern both vertebrate (Alpine ibex, chamois and Alpine marmot) and invertebrates species. The main purpose of these investigations is to measure the variations in behavioural ecology and Life history of a large number of tagged animals and in the altitudinal distribution of the invertebrate species induced by global warming.

In the last two years, studies on the effects of Global warming have focused on the conservation *status* of pollinator species (mainly bumblebees and butterflies), as a consequence of anthropogenic action (domestic grazing) and the increase in average temperatures.

The GPNP believes that the promotion of scientific research is one of the main purpose of a protected area, obviously after the Nature protection: the Park seen as an "open-air laboratory" that invites and motivates national (and non-national research institutes) to carry out long-term investigations to better understand the dynamics of environmental transformations present in the Alpine Arch.