

**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)¹*

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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¹ 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 with the areas subjected to different protection constraints: these areas are now applied. In the winter of 2021 and spring 2022 some meetings were 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 forbidden. Compensation measures are being studied for the areas ("A") in which the owners will no longer be able to graze following the application of the Plan.

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 8.999.000 (in 2022). This means an average annual contribution that allows the correct functioning of the Park. 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 (PITEM) and Life Program (GreyMarble and Resque Alpyr).

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 60% of the Park staff. Park rangers are mainly employed in protection activities.

However, some active conservation actions and important activities for restoring the integrity of some habitats cannot be financed only with national contributions. To carry out these actions GPNP mainly used European funds. A significant amount of funds (about 4 million euros) were allocated per 2 years by MITE for energy efficiency actions of buildings owned by the Park or by municipalities included within the boundaries of the protected area. These extraordinary financial contributions will increase the Park's resources in the coming years, but will be linked and constrained to specific projects. With these funds was also possible to finance climate change mitigation actions, in particular relating to the increase in CO2 capture by Alpine meadows.

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

As a result of repeated retirements, PNGP staff in 2022 was reduced to 64 units, with a sharp reduction in the number of rangers. This means that approximately 25% of the planned units are currently not in service. At present, it was not yet possible to replace these personnel, mainly due to turnover block imposed by the Italian Ministry. In 2022 the MITE (today MASE) allowed the Park to activate a call for applications for 9 new rangers. In the autumn the procedures for the selection were activated. The recruitment will take place in the spring of 2023. However, the new hires will not be sufficient to cover the full staff of the Surveillance Service, above all to reach the ratio of 1 ranger per 1.000 ha, as envisaged by ministerial guidelines.

Furthermore, there is an increasing number of staff shortages in administrative and technical services, again due to retirements.

To ensure the full efficiency of the director's activity, an expansion of the workforce would be necessary, in particular with the recruitment of a deputy director or an administrative director, but this expansion is not actually allowed by current national laws.

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

As human interventions, especially infrastructures, are very reduced in the GPNP (the Park boundaries are placed above 1000 m of altitude, therefore they include mainly non-urbanized and uninhabited areas) urban development tend to be concentrated in the bottom of the valleys, around the historical settlements.

With the recent approval of the Park management plan, management decisions are easier as the interface with local administrations are precisely regulated.

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.

The Park hope to soon reach an agreement with the local communities, with the aim of definitively closing the traffic of vehicles with internal combustion engines: meetings on this topics were realised in summer 2022

and a project is being prepared for reducing motor traffic in some areas of the Park (Colle del Nivolet and Valnontey) with the aim of reducing internal combustion vehicles by replacing them with electric ones.

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.

During 2022 there were no changes in the management of forest resources: 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.

With the financial contribution of the MITE-MASE, actions relating to the conservation of chestnut groves (EEC priority habitat) were implemented, in particular in the southern slopes of the Park.

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

As indicated in previous reports, in the last 25 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 and meat: most farms are managed part-time. Although the percentage of people employed in agriculture is very low (3.5%), the impact of domestic grazing is far from irrelevant: this is due to the fact that on the alpine pastures the transhumance of the herds and flocks is important, during the summer. This is the reason why the Park carried out research on the impact of domestic grazing on 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.

These studies have already highlighted the importance of two main variables: the abandonment of traditional grazing practices and climate change. Both of these actions involve changes in the presence and density of different animal species, with a loss of biodiversity at the local level.

In 2022 the presence of some hybrids between domestic goats and Alpine ibex were detected: this is certainly a negative effect of pastoral management, linked to the abandonment of animals at the end of the summer. Research and identification actions have been carried out on these hybrids and some animals were yet removed from the protected area.

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 is characterized by the presence of important water collection infrastructures (dams and complex and multiple collection sites) for energetic production. Most of these infrastructure were planned and approved before the establishment of the Park. After the approval of the Park Management Plan, only the small water withdrawals, only for local energetic purpose, can be authorized.

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.

In autumn 2022, two projects were presented for the upgrading and reconstruction of existing water collection structures, in particular by CVA s.p.a., on the Valle d'Aosta side of the Park. These projects are under examination with an Appropriate Assessment procedure at ministerial level.

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

The members of the Scientific advisory council were identified and approved by the Council of the Park and, to date, the Commission is effective and operational.

The first meeting between the scientific commissions of the two cross-border parks, Vanoise-Gran Paradiso, is scheduled for spring 2023.

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, till now, 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 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, Alpine chamois and 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.

The effective validity of these research actions is confirmed by the numerous scientific publications that this Park has produced in the last twenty years (largely available on www.pngp.it).

In recent years, park research were focused in particular on the effects of climate change, with projects on variations in animal biodiversity, landscape transformations and glaciers variations.

In this research and monitoring action, both Park and external researchers are supported by rangers, whose training is increasingly directed towards data collection and active conservation actions.

The PNGP, in agreement with the Direction of the Nature Conservation Service, proposed to apply the same data collection methodologies on some animal *taxa* also to other Alpine national protected areas, with the aim of creating a national database on climatic transformations in alpine environment. The results of these surveys, carried out in 4 different Italian national parks (PNGP, P.N. Stelvio, P.N. Valgrande, P.N. Bellunesi Dolomites), are already the subject of very interesting reports.