

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)¹*

Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports

Annual report for the year 2020

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: **Romania**

Name of the area: **Piatra Craiului National Park**

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:
2011, 9 years

Central authority concerned:

Name: Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests

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Authority responsible for its management:

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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. complete the process of preparing and approving the new management plan by the end of 2011.

Two management plans were approved since 2011.

First management plan was approved in December 2013 through the Governmental Decision No. 1057/2013.

The Park Administration implemented a Sector Operational Program Pillar 4 project, «The revision of Piatra Craiului National Park's Management Plan». Based on the results of field studies there were included in the park's management plan some activities in order to maintain or bring the species and habitats of European interest in a favourable conservation status. The revised management plan was approved by the Scientific Council of Piatra Craiului National Park and it was sent in October 2015 to be approved by the National Environmental Protection Agency. By the end of 2015 the revised plan was sent to the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests and was approved in February 2020 through the Ministerial Order No. 296/21.02.2020.

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. secure the budget of the national park so that the national park administration is able to manage the park appropriately and has all financial resources needed in order to pay the staff on a regular basis;

The national park budget is approved through a Common Order signed by Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Ministry of Public Finances and Ministry of Work and Social Protection. 10% of the budget come from the national park administration efforts (visitor fee, selling products at the Visitor Center, guiding fees, approval documentation taxes etc). The total budget is 1,5 mil. lei and the staff salaries 1,2 mil. lei. Besides the annual budget, the park administration implemented during the last 9 years several projects with a total value of 8.431.541,37 lei.

2. complete the construction of the headquarters and other infrastructure, especially the exhibition room and other tourist facilities, within three years and make particular efforts to raise the appropriate funds to achieve this;

The Visitor Center was opened in April 2016 and has received until now over 27860 visitors. The budget for construction works came from a SOP project implemented between 2012-2015. During this project there were also built an information point at Curmatura and 4 information kiosks.

The tourist facilities were improved with a cycling network and new marked trails (in total 42 homologated routes with over 200 kms).

3. elaborate and implement a specific high profile programme devoted to the promotion, preservation and restoration of the local architecture and landscape; this exemplary programme should be implemented with the help of relevant specialists and contribute to making this region a model for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage;

The management plan of Piatra Craiului National Park establishes several principles for the sustainable development of human settlements to preserve the local architecture and traditions: 1.Keep the existing parcels in the historical format; 2.Encourage the preservation and reconversion of the existing constructed parcels; 3.Encourage the use of historical architecture, adapted to the modern needs; 4.Fit the new buildings into the local landscape and climate; 5.Keep the existing vegetation; 6.Use of local materials and traditional crafts. It also contains special regulation to preserve the local architecture and landscape.

In 2013 there was printed a Building Guide in the Sustainable Development Area of Piatra Craiului, created by the architect Raluca Munteanu, one of the members of the Scientific Council of Piatra Craiului National Park. The Guide is available online on the park's webpage. The principles of this guide are inspired from the Architectural Policy in Romania for 2010-2015 – the culture of the constructed environment and the quality of life, promoted by the Architects Order in Romania and are integrated in the management plan.

4. pursue the scientific work and monitoring of biodiversity in every sector of the park; those activities should assess the status and trends of species and habitats, considering the national park as part of a functional ecosystem and consequently use appropriate methods and indicators to keep the national park administration aware of important changes to this ecosystem;

There are several monitoring protocols, approved by the Forest and Environment Ministry in 2010, targeting especially the species and habitats of European importance. 11 monitoring protocols, including *Ligularia sibirica*, bats species from caves and bats species of European interest, capercaillie, chamois, birds of prey of European interest, forest habitats, bushes with *Pinus mugo* and *Rhododendron myrtifolium*, alluvial forest with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*, were established during one of the last projects implemented whose goal was the improvement of the conservation status for the biodiversity in Piatra Craiului National Park.

The scientific work was also important during another implemented project, aiming for the revision of the management plan of the National Park and ROSCI0194 site. On this occasion there were identified new species in the southern part of the protected area.

In 2016 there was established another Natura 2000 site (ROSPA0165 Piatra Craiului) that covers the National Park territory, for the protection of bird species.

For the large carnivore species there is also a collaboration protocol with Conservation Carpathia Foundation to collect samples for genetical analyses that will help to assess the population and the status of these species inside Piatra Craiului National Park.

From 2018, the Park Administration is one of the pilot sites in the ConnectGreen international project, with the main objective to maintain, respectively improve the ecological connectivity between natural habitats, especially between Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas of transnational relevance in the Carpathian ecoregion, using large carnivores as umbrella species.

Since April 2019 the Park Administration is one of the partners in the Building Management Capacities of Carpathian Protected Areas for the Integration and Harmonisation of Biodiversity Protection and Local Social Economic Development (CentralParks) project, financed by Interreg – Central Europe Program. Its main goal is to improve management capacity of protected areas.

From 2020 the Park Administration is one of the partners in "Increasing the economical competitive status of forest sector and the life quality by knowledge, technology and competence transfer" project, aiming to evaluate the functions and services of forest ecosystems and to identify the main threats to forest biodiversity.

5. regarding both central and local forest authorities, more attention should be paid to the enforcement of the forest law on the national park's fringe and in the surroundings of the park; the measures taken and the results obtained should be reported to the Council of Europe on an annual basis;

In 2020 the Park Administration organised 96 control actions to enforce the protected areas law, 25 of them with the help of other authorities. The result was 58 contravention fines with a total of 43500 lei.

The Carpathia Foundation purchased 16.000 ha of forest land for conservation in the national park surroundings. 2.500 ha of this surface are situated inside the national park. The foundation purchased also 2 game management areas in the national park surroundings and the main goal is the conservation of game species.

The "Forest Radar" regulation was established in 2014. As a result the illegal logging and transport has decreased since then at national level. By Government Decision no. 497/2020 a second improved version of SUMAL, a system that tracks any transport of timber, should be implemented by 31st of October 2020.

6. pursue the efforts made by the national park administration to address the litter and garbage issues and to engage a new phase of activities facilitated by this administration; a detailed report on the results of those activities should be sent to the Council of Europe every two years.

In 2020 the Park Administration organised 5 garbage collection campaigns, with the help of volunteers, along the touristic trails, with a total length of 30 km.

The local authorities in Dambovicioara are regularly collecting the garbage, and they also set up some resting areas along the road, containing garbage bins for the tourists. The Environment Guard controlled regularly the southern area of the park and eliminated some collecting platforms for garbage that were incompatible with the national legislation.

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.

There were no significant changes since last annual report.

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 change.

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.

The European Diploma logo was broader used on the Piatra Craiului National Park's printed materials, together with an explanation of the reasons for awarding the European Diploma.
All the 3 logos (National Park, European Diploma and National Forest Administration) can be seen on the park official papers and webpage, inside the visitor center, on all the information panels on the field, on the printed or displayed maps.

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
Some of the mountain hay meadows, habitats of anthropic origin, were abandoned and subsequently covered by shrubs and trees or reconverted in grazing pastures for livestock. The compensation system for the owners is still a legislative issue.
The spruce forest gains altitude on the eastern flank of the mountain, slowly replacing the subalpine habitats, probably because of the global warming and the lack of grazing above the tree line.
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
No change
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds
The number of chamois constantly increased because the ban of hunting in the national park.

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
- 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
There is an increasing pressure to build modern pensions and holiday houses that affects the traditional architecture of the mountain villages.
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
- 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context
The human settlements in the park area use tourism industry as one of the main source of income, decreasing the pressure to overexploit the natural resources, especially timber.

8. Education and scientific interest

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
The first Visitation Strategy of Piatra Craiului National Park was elaborated in 2003, being the first sustainable tourism strategy for a protected area in Romania. It was elaborated under the umbrella of the project „Biodiversity Conservation Management Project in Romania”, financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) trough the World Bank (WB) as implementing agency, the Romanian Government and the National Forest Administration (NFA). The strategy focuses on public awareness and education of more than 110.000 visitors per year.
The National Park has a Communication Plan as well which focuses on raising the information and awareness level of the visitors and local communities regarding the national park's biodiversity and the necessity to promote this through information, partnership and consultation in order to reduce the negative impact on biodiversity.
- 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
Since 2016 Piatra Craiului National Park has an active Visitor Center which was established through the project SOP Environment “Improvement of the conservation status of Piatra Craiului National Park's biodiversity, through awareness, information, visitation and monitoring”, financed from European Funds. Up until now the visitor center had over 27.860 visitors, including pupils who have

participated to the educational programs and different delegations. The interior space of the Visitor Center is organised like a loop trail, what offers information on flora, fauna, geology, ridge and scree areas, caves, local communities and hiking / climbing trails within the Piatra Craiului National Park.

The exhibition area is realised in such a way that it can offer unique and emotional experiences to visitors. Therefore, due to the interactive way of transmitting information, consisting in text, pictures and videos, using LED displays and Kinect – motion sensing device, lights and sounds, visitors can discover and learn about the Park's specific elements. Each monitor placed in the Center offers information on diverse themes which are presented as descriptions, short videos, picture galleries and puzzles. Also, within the Visitor Center a sheepfold, an augmented reality sand box, a model of a cave with characteristic geological formations and a 3D model of the National Park's surface can be discovered. On the 3D model several different maps can be projected, like hiking trails, soil, rock and habitat types, ownership, land use and interior zoning.

Also, the trail within the Center is designed for the visual impaired people too. Due to sounds and boards in Braille they can find out information on the protected area.

An information point was also opened to support visitors and field activities carried out by rangers and researchers.

At the visitor center different promotional materials are presented, like badge, magnet, t-shirts, poster, and stickers which can be purchased. Also leaflets are offered for the visitors and the official tourist map can be purchased and the mountain bike trails map as well.

8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behaviour (number, distribution in time and space)

This year, with the restrictions of Covid-19 pandemic, the visitor center was visited by more than 2090 visitors.

In the national park there are 7 mountain shelters, 42 tourist trails and 11 mountain bike trails. Yearly the national park is visited by more than 110.000 tourists, flocking in the lower areas like Prapastiile Zarnestilor or Dambovicioarei Gorges, while the ridge is traversed by less than 10% of the total visitors of the national park.

8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)

This year several different interest groups were received in the visitor center, respectively representatives from Brasov Forestry University and SBRAS Forestry Institute and Center of Forest Health Krasnoyarsk from Rusia; PhD philosophy students and professors from Romania; group of counselors from the procurement service of the European Fund Minister from Bucharest, Sibiu and Timisoara; the Environment Minister, who held a press conference and had a visit in the park; representatives from Complex Silva who planned to include the Visitor Center in their tourist offers; representatives from "Moldsilva" Agency from Republic of Moldova, central administrative authority in forestry and hunting. There were also special visits the previous years, to mention only the most important of them: Prime Minister meeting with the local producers, Minister of European Funds delegation, the reunion of biodiversity directors from EU countries, the reunion of forests administrators directors from EUSTAFOR organization, delegation of US Embassy and National Park Service 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.)

The scientific work was important during an implemented project, aiming for the revision of the management plan of the National Park and ROSCI0194 site. On this occasion there were identified new species in the southern part of the protected area.

For the large carnivores species there is also a collaboration protocol with Conservation Carpathia Foundation to collect samples for genetic analyses that will help to assess the population and the status of these species inside the national park. Modern equipment was acquired and state of the art methodology is used for the monitoring of these umbrella species that help to identify the ecological corridors during the ConnectGreen project.

From 2020 the Park Administration is one of the partners in "Increasing the economical competitive status of forest sector and the life quality by knowledge, technology and competence transfer" project, aiming to evaluate the functions and services of forestry ecosystems and to identify the main threats to forest biodiversity.

8.2.2. Scientific publications

A guide of species and habitat of European importance from Piatra Craiului National Park and Natura 2000 sites was elaborated during a SOP project, aiming to improve their conservation status.

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)
Enlargement of the strictly and integrated protection area of the national park by including 351,15 ha of state owned forest .

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
During a project sponsored by French Embassy in Romania aiming to restore the ecological balance and the natural type of forest, there were planted 7000 beech and sycamore saplings on a surface of 1,4 ha, included in a man-made spruce forest, planted a century ago and affected now by the bark beetle.
- 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
No change
- 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
Barriers were installed on the forestry roads traversing strictly protected areas or at the entrance of the caves not opened to the public. The access on the unmarked trails or on the rock climbing routes needs also the approval of the park administration.
- 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
During the implemented projects, for the wildlife research there was acquired state of the art field equipment, including drone, thermal vision monoculars, bicycles, camera traps and GPS, also 4x4 cars, ATV and snowmobile.
- 10.1.5. Waste management
No change
- 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
The Visitor Center uses heat pump and solar panels for hot water, while the Information Center from Curmatura uses solar panels for electricity.
- 10.2. Management
- 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
No change
- 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
No change
- 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
No change
- 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action
There were several control action to enforce the national park's regulations, ended with contravention fines for illegal access with motor vehicles, abandonment of garbage or illegal building.

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

The award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas recognises the management and the conservation efforts of Piatra Craiului National Park Administration, attracting more visitors in the protected area and raising awareness of the importance of nature conservation.