

**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 2021

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: Bulgaria

Name of the area: **Central Balkan National Park**

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:
4

Central authority concerned:

Name: Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW)

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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.

N/A

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. implement the new management plan and in particular control the protective measures for the different zones; after five years, make a comprehensive, mid-term assessment and revise the relevant parts of the plan as appropriate;
The second management plan of Central Balkan National Park (CBNP) came into force on the 5th of April 2016 and will be valid until 2025 (according to the Ordinance for the development of protected areas' management plans they are updated every 10 years). A mid-term evaluation of implementation was expected in 2020 but postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis situation. In July 2021 the public discussion on the implementation of the plan was held. In front of more than 30 representatives of several different stakeholder groups and representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Water experts from the Park Directorate present all the activities in the prolonged period from the official end of the previous Management Plan (2001 – 2010) up to the beginning of the current year. This comprehensively presented report for the things that have already happen and those that due to different reasons still cannot happen create a fuller picture of the current situation in the Park the transition between two management plans and the “hot topics” which over the years have never found their solution. Positive feedback was received for the achieved goals regarding the inclusion of the CBNP in the UNESCO World Heritage List, its inclusion as a core and buffer zone of a biosphere reserve and the renewal of the European diploma. Good words were said about the preventive and security activities in the Park, which according to the documents is the protected territory in Bulgaria with the most intensive control over the implementation of the established regimes and norms. The group of stakeholders – users of grazing resources of the Park, was divided in their opinion. Some of them expressed their dissatisfaction with the many restrictions on the use of this resource, but support for these actions of the park administration was received by representatives of the scientific community and the Ministry of Environment and Water. The tourist community was also not united in its position. Some of the representatives do not agree with part of the activities under the project (financed by the ERDF under the OPE) aimed to protect and restore habitats throughout park. The project envisages restoration activities in habitats, partially damaged by erosion in the scope of the tourist infrastructure - dirt roads and tourist paths. They also insist on the inclusion of new marked tourist routes in the Management Plan. The position of the Park and the Ministry remains unchanged – with more than 580 km of marked tourist trails in the Park will not be allowed to create new routes for conservation reasons, as well as for pragmatic reasons – maintaining routes safe.
2. take measures to better control poaching in the park and implement as soon as possible the strategic guidelines for the development of the security and control in the Central Balkan National Park, which includes a section on the prevention of poaching. In particular, strictly limit road development and systematically control road usage;
The main part of the work of the Park Directorate is focused on the observance of the regimes and norms of the protected territory. Rangers department is the largest one in the Directorate structure – 52 employees (out of 71 in the whole administration). This department is directly committed to observing the regimes and norms. Prevention of poaching (in all its forms) has always been and is one of the main priorities in the daily job of park employees. The strategic guidelines for the development of guarding and control in the Central Balkan National Park are developed within the framework of a project financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Operational Program Environment (OPE) (programming period 2007 – 2013). Much of the recommendations and guidelines in it are carried out by the Rangers' Department. These ones, related to the technical provision of the work of the park rangers, have been partially fulfilled – monitoring and control equipment (still insufficient quantity) is provided. MOEW regularly provide terrain clothing and shoes for the rangers. Under a new project financed by the ERDF through OPE (programming period 2014 – 2020) specialized equipment (new GPS devices, drones and transponder readers) were delivered. Second time tendering process run for delivery of new generation radio, specialized vehicles, monitoring equipment, night vision devices. Deliveries are expected in 2022 (if there are no new appeal procedures).

3. maintain strict control on grazing permits and prohibit any increase of grazing animals; maintain the pressure to reduce grazing by horses, which are much more difficult to control, and increase the number of water sources and their access;
Every year, the Park Directorate spends enormous administrative and human capacity to control the most significant use of natural resources in the park – the livestock grazing. In the last six years, the Annual plan for grazing and hay using in Central Balkan NP has not changed significantly. The framework of the administrative procedure for applying, permitting, distributing and controlling the use of the pastures in the park is preserved. For the fourth consecutive year the precision of the processing of the documents has been increased in practice to 100% correct declaration of available livestock (in application forms) and to approx. 70% correct tracking of the grazing process during the pasture season by compiling of the necessary protocols in time. In 2017 had expired the last agri-environmental commitments of horse owners which had started in the previous programming period 2007 – 2013. Therefore, since 2018, there are no longer any horse owners supported by an agri-environmental measure.
By decision of the Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria from September 2018 the Park Directorate is a beneficiary under a project financed by the ERDF under the OPE. Within this project measures to protect and restore habitats throughout the park are implemented and will be implemented in the years up to 2024. In 2021 (for second year in row) on some critical border lines between pasture lands and other park areas with no commercial uses were positioned wooden and electric fences. After the end of pasture season they were dismantled. In 2021 was implemented restoration of half of the planned old watering facilities in the pasture areas of the park. The process will continue in 2022. This will reduce the negative pressure on streams and downstream habitats in pasture areas.
4. set up comprehensive monitoring of the impact of grazing; in general, allocate the necessary funding for more management-oriented scientific research and studies;
One of the activities in the above mentioned ERDF-funded project is to establish a methodology for the annual assessment of natural habitats subject to livestock grazing. This methodology will assess the productivity of pastures according to the types of natural habitats in them and the specific conditions of the environment. In addition, the status of natural habitats in pastureland will be monitored in relation to the intensity and duration of their use by livestock. The application of the methodology will allow assessment of the overall condition of habitats used for livestock grazing. It will contribute to the precision in making management decisions on the ways and times of resource use. The technical specification and the tender documentation for the procurement have been prepared in 2019. Selection of contractor was finished in the spring of 2020. The implementation on terrain was held in the period 2020 – 2021. Sample plots are selected; pilot testing of the suggested from the implementer amended methodology was applied in both field seasons. In parallel, training was provided to the employees of the Park Directorate.
5. propose solutions at national level to improve the infrastructure related to mountain pastures, like shelters for animals and shepherds or dairy facilities; improve their visual and ecological impact, as well as their sanitary conditions for dairy production;
The Park Directorate is looking for solutions to the problems of domestication of pastures – offering legal and at the same time aesthetic variants of shelters for livestock and the herdsmen, creating conditions for primary processing of milk. The status of the park – a protected area of second category according to the Bulgarian legislation and the IUCN, as well as exclusive state property, does not allow the creation of new infrastructure. Variants and funding are sought to give a new look and functions to existing buildings and remains of buildings. During the previous programming period (2007 – 2013), as part of a project financed by the ERDF through OPE, an activity for the development of a model for 11 pastures from the pasture areas of the park has been carried out. Physical implementation of the model is yet to be funded. This programming period (2014 – 2020) does not provide for such activities to be implemented in protected areas and the OPE is not a financing option at least until 2020. We are also looking for opportunities through the status of the Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve (see point 7 below) to offer new opportunities for preserving and marketing these products.
6. explore solutions to increase the role of the national park in the management of tourist infrastructure (chalets) inside the park, including their maintenance, the control of their ecological impact and their use as information points;
The Park Directorate intends to use the mechanisms of the Biosphere Reserve (see point 7 below) in order to implement, in partnership with the Bulgarian Tourist Union (the owner of almost all high-mountain accommodation base in Bulgaria), projects for the construction of waste management systems and of waste water management systems in the chalets on the territory of the national park.
7. use the newly established biosphere reserve to reinforce the role of the Public Advisory Council as a link between the national park, the municipalities and civil society organisations around the park; allocate adequate financial and human resources to fulfil the tasks and commitments undertaken at international level

with the designation of the park as part of the biosphere reserve and World Heritage property and establish, as soon as possible, corresponding management structures;

With decision of 29th session of the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (June 2017) CBNP became part of Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve (CBBR). The nine reserves into the park are the core zone of the BR. The remain part of the park is the buffer zone of the BR. Five of the municipalities around the national park are forming the transition area of the new BR. Central Balkan BR became one of the first four Bulgarian post-Seville type biosphere reserves. Biosphere Reserve is not a category of protected area under Bulgarian law, and so far it has not been difficult to manage the areas with such designation because they had fallen entirely within the scope of strict nature reserves. With the announcement of the first 4 post-Seville biosphere reserves in front the administrations responsible for the respective territories and the other stakeholders raised a new challenge. This is the organization of a common management body to function at the level of partner relations between the cooperating parties in the framework of the MAB designation. At the end of 2017, the Park Directorate initiated the first meeting of the partner administrations within the largest and most complexly organized biosphere reserve in Bulgaria – the CBBR. The partner administrations are the Park Directorate, five municipal administrations and the Executive Forest Agency. After a series of meetings between partners and consultations with lawyers, a model for formalizing cooperation has been developed. It is the Coordination Board of the Biosphere Reserve, which will represent each of the seven administrations, including through a civilian quota. The Coordinating Council's draft statutes have already been developed, working groups on the issues of the biosphere reserve have been established (in which the partners' expertise is currently attracted), and registration of the organization under Bulgarian law is ongoing. The local elections in 2019 and Covid-19 crisis in 2020 and 2021 delayed the process of formalizing the partnership, but the informal partnership continued, mainly focusing on the development of information materials, presentation of the biosphere reserve in the media space, festivals in the municipalities from the transition zone (not in 2020), etc.

In 2021 has started implementation of project "Creating a comprehensive brand of Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve" financed by UNESCO Participation Programme. The project aims to create commercial logo of the CB Biosphere Reserve and to create network of certified partners in the transition area of the BR. The network will promote the ideas of the BR and Man and Biosphere Programme in the respective municipalities and will work for recognition and a specific trade niche for all local businesses and initiatives.

In 2021 CBBR accepted second and third pair volunteers for six month period (starting from March) as part of the initiative of German National Commission for UNESCO – kulturweit.

8. as soon as possible, prepare and adopt management plans for the Natura 2000 areas adjacent to the park.

In 2018, a new concept was developed at the national level for the management of Natura 2000 sites in Bulgaria. According to the concept the management of the sites is assumed by the regional inspectorates for environment and water – the regional bodies (subdivisions) of the Ministry of Environment and Water. In 2019 the decision for inclusion of the national park directorates in this process was taken. This applies to the sites that have a territorial overlap with the parks. The legal changes are still under preparation. Funding from the ERDF through OPE is provided to develop management plans for all Natura 2000 sites over the next 5 years. The process is expected to begin immediately after the legal changes that will allow this to happen. In 2020 and 2021 the initiative in this field was seriously delayed due to Covid-19 crisis and internal political crisis.

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.

The Director of Central Balkan National Park Directorate was changed two times in 2021 .

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 in boundaries.

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.

In 2021 CBNPD continued to use the EDPA logo for printing materials as follows: 1 brochure and calendar for year 2022. The logo was used also in all presentations for the CBNP presented by park employees. On the

webpage of Central Balkan there is information about the European Diploma of the park and link to the official EDPA webpage.

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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